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A Marriage for Love

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A MARRIAGE FOR LOVE

PQ
2273
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1891

LUDOVIC HALÉVY

Of the Académie Française,

author of "the abbé constantin," etc.

A MARRIAGE FOR LOVE

TRANSLATED BY

FRANK HUNTER POTTER

ILLUSTRATED BY

WILSON DE MEZA

NEW YORK

DODD, MEAD, AND COMPANY

1893

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

PAGE

"SHE WAS NO LONGER UPON THE LITTLE STOOL: SHE WAS ON HIS KNEES" . . . . . *Frontispiece*

"I AM APPOINTED SUB-LIEUTENANT IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CHASSEURS" 12

"TO-DAY I PUT ON MY FIRST LONG GOWN" 15

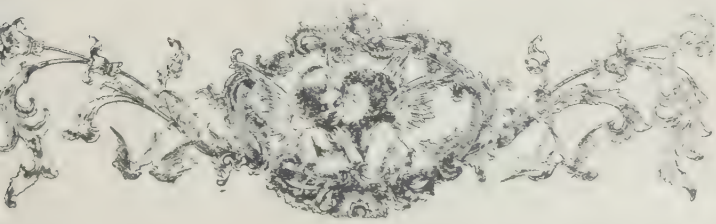
"'WHERE SHALL I KISS HIM'" 23

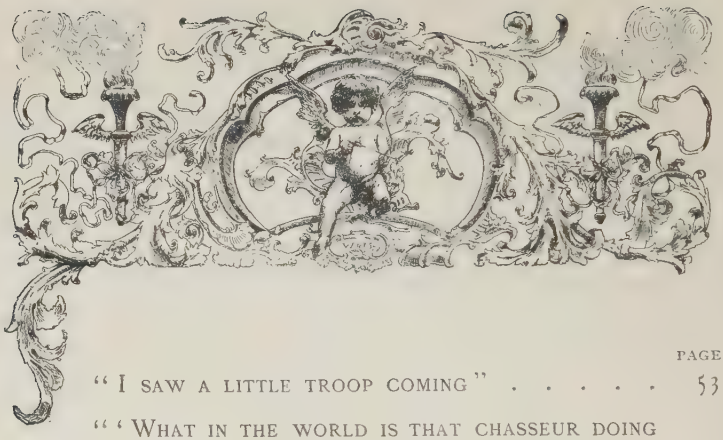
"'LOOK, YOU LITTLE GOOSE; LOOK, I SAY!'" 27

"'CERTAINLY,' SAID HE; 'BEGIN'" 33

"WHENEVER I RAISED MY EYES, HE WOULD LOWER HIS" . 39

"IT WOULD BE A VERY VULGAR THING TO ATTEMPT TO FASCINATE ME BY SUCH MEANS" 47





PAGE

"I SAW A LITTLE TROOP COMING" 53

"'WHAT IN THE WORLD IS THAT CHASSEUR DOING HERE?'" 69

"BUT AFTERWARDS, AS I WAS POURING THE COFFEE" . . 85

"WHILE HE WAS READING SHE WOULD LEAN HER HEAD LOVINGLY AGAINST HIS KNEES" 89

"HER VOICE IS CHARMING. AND HER FACE!" 97

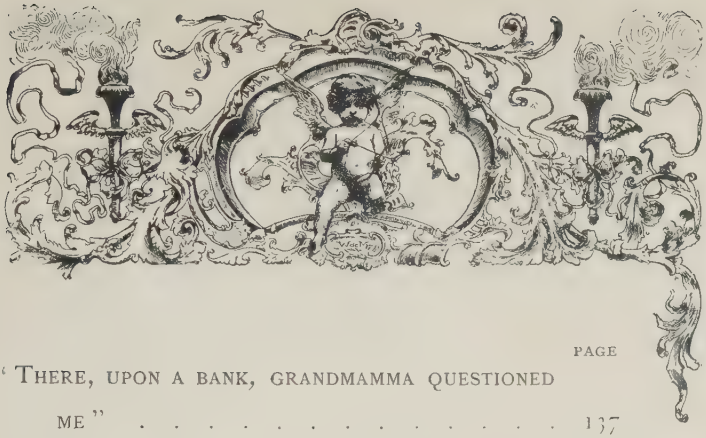
"I TOOK LOUISE BACK TO THE TRAIN" 101

"I TROTTED JUPITER AND GALLOPED HIM" 105

"I TALKED TO PICOT ALL THE WAY HOME" 111

"THE DOOR OPENED. IT WAS HE!" 117

"'I BEG YOUR PARDON, MONSIEUR, BUT WHAT IS THE HORSE'S NAME?'" 133



PAGE

"THERE, UPON A BANK, GRANDMAMMA QUESTIONED ME" 137

"GRANDMAMMA WAS WRITING A LETTER WHICH BEGAN WITH THESE WORDS: 'MY DEAR GENERAL'" . . 143

"'WELL, YES, COLONEL; I CONFESS THAT I THINK HER CHARMING'" 149

"I REPLIED: — 'OH! YES, PAPA'" 157

"GOOD BYE" 171

A MARRIAGE FOR LOVE.

HE, simply and in a telegraphic style, used to write every morning and evening in a diary a little programme and a brief account of his day. He had begun it at twenty, on the 3d of October, 1869, and this was the little note inscribed under that date:

I am appointed sub-lieutenant in the 21st chasseurs.

When the 31st of December came he would place in a drawer the diary of the dying year, and pass on to the diary of that which followed.

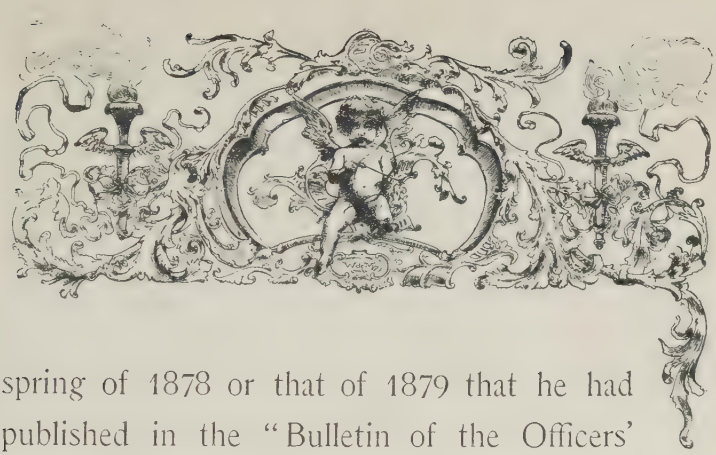
She, with more care and at greater length, in pretty volumes bound in blue morocco and securely locked, used to keep, when she was a young girl, a detailed journal of her life. She had begun it at sixteen, and her first entry, dated the 17th of May, 1876, was thus expressed:

To-day I put on my first long gown.

She was married on the 17th of August, 1879, and then she stopped the record. She wrote nothing more in the little blue morocco books; but she had preserved and hidden mysteriously in the bottom of a secret drawer the volumes which related her life between the month of May, 1876, and the month of August, 1879; between her first long gown and her marriage.

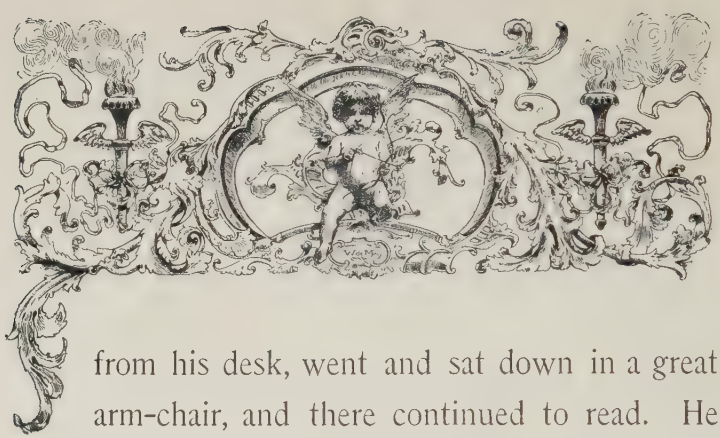
He also had been married on the 17th of August, 1879, but he had not discontinued his daily entries, so that in his desk were thirteen little diaries in

which his life was noted day by day, and very exactly, in spite of the dryness of the form. From time to time he would amuse himself by taking one of these diaries at random. He would open it and read fifteen or twenty pages, thus living again in the past and placing "formerly" face to face with "to-day." Now on the 19th of June, 1881, the young sub-lieutenant of 1869, become a captain and recommended for chef-d'escadron, was alone about ten o'clock in the evening, in his study, before his desk; and, with his head in his hands, was wondering whether it was in the



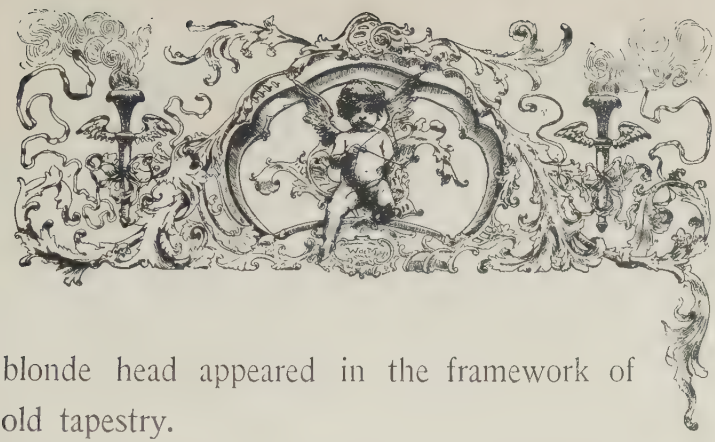
spring of 1878 or that of 1879 that he had published in the "Bulletin of the Officers' Union" an article on the new organization of the transportation system in Austria-Hungary. It occurred to him that he would probably find in his diaries the date of the publication of the article.

He opened the drawer containing the diaries, and chance caused him to lay his hand upon the year 1879. He began to look through the little volume. He turned and turned the pages, but suddenly he stopped and read with a certain attention a passage which caused him to smile. He rose, moved away



from his desk, went and sat down in a great arm-chair, and there continued to read. He was no longer thinking in the least of the organization of the transportation system of Austria-Hungary. Old memories, evidently, were awaking in his heart and calling faint smiles to his lips and a shade of tenderness to his eyes. Three or four times this cavalry captain was obliged to stop with the end of his finger a slight, a very slight beginning of a tear.

He was absorbed in this reading when one of the portieres of his study opened gently, and a delicious



blonde head appeared in the framework of old tapestry.

What was he doing there in that great easy-chair? Could he be asleep? He had pitilessly sent her away a half-hour before because he wished to work, and because when she was there she disturbed him, troubled him, and put into his head ideas which were not at all ideas of work.

Then, with infinite precautions, the little blonde, slender and lissome in the long folds of her white muslin morning-gown, slipped into the room, took three or four steps upon tip-toe, and bent to one

side. He was not asleep; he was reading, and very attentively, for he had heard nothing, and had not moved. He was within his right. To read is to work.

Holding her breath, she continued her way towards the arm-chair, slowly, very slowly — and as she went she asked herself a question. She was still somewhat a child — one-and-twenty, and very much in love. This said in her excuse, here is the question which she was asking herself:

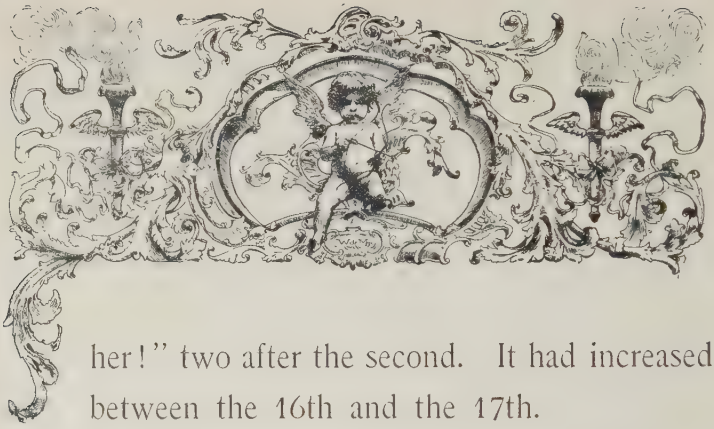
"Where shall I kiss him? On the brow, on the cheek, or anywhere, at a venture?"

She drew nearer. Already, with the ends of her fingers, she was almost touching the captain's hair, and was about to decide resolutely upon "anywhere, at a venture," when suddenly she became horribly pale. On the two open pages of the diary she had just read:

June 16th.
I love her!

June 17th.
I love her!!

A single exclamation mark after the first "I love



her!" two after the second. It had increased between the 16th and the 17th.

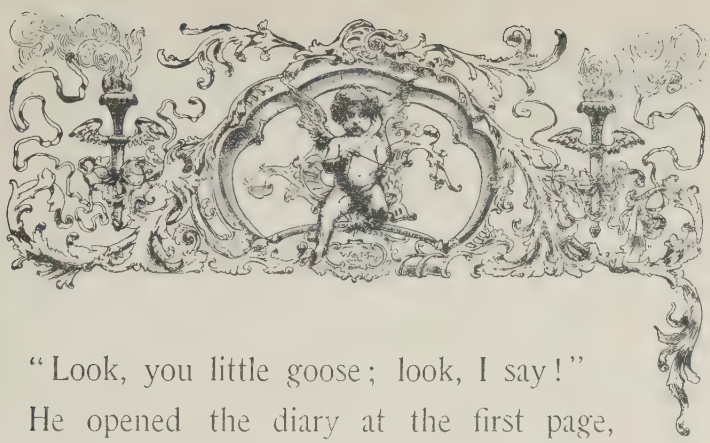
She uttered a little cry, and said, all a-tremble:

"What is that? What is it?"

She began to faint. He rose and supported her in his arms; but she, bursting into tears and giving loose to a flood of words broken by sobs, cried:

"June 16th, I love her! June 17th, I love her!! and to-day is the 19th of June! You love another woman! Oh, it is frightful! it is frightful!"

Then he, wiping away her tears with two kisses, said:



"Look, you little goose; look, I say!"

He opened the diary at the first page, which bore in great printed figures, "1879."

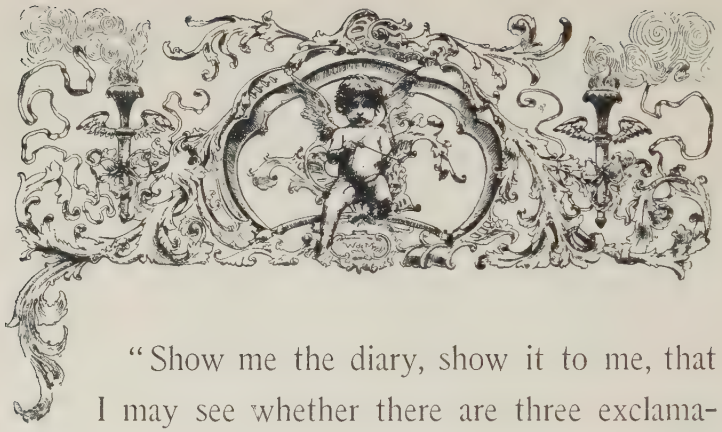
"Ah!" she cried, joyfully, amid a little remnant of sobs, "it was I! It was I!"

Then she added, innocently, imprudently:

"So you kept a journal, too?"

"How, I too? Then it seems that you—?"

She was obliged to own that if he had written "I love her" in little black morocco diaries, she had written the like in blue morocco journals. And as she said to her husband:



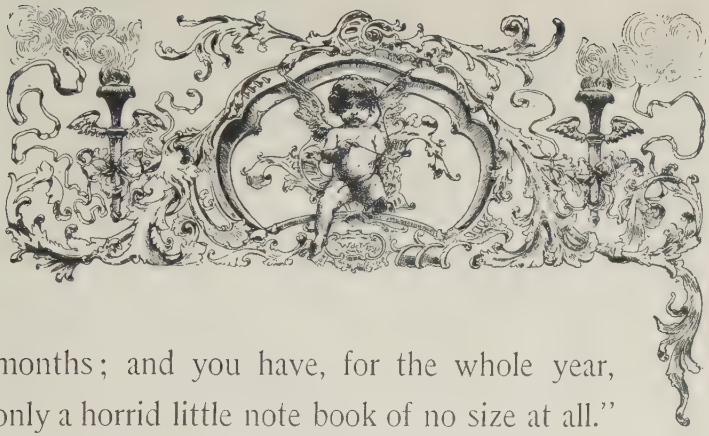
"Show me the diary, show it to me, that I may see whether there are three exclamation marks on the 18th and four on the 19th."

"We will have a fair exchange," he replied. "Go fetch your books and we will compare. We will see which of us has the more exclamation marks."

The temptation was too strong. She went for the year 1879, and returned with three books of very respectable size.

"Three volumes!" he cried.

"Yes, one for each three of the first nine



months; and you have, for the whole year, only a horrid little note book of no size at all."

"One can say a great many things in a few words. You will see. Come and sit here beside me; there is room for two on this great chair."

"Yes, by sitting in your lap. But that is impossible."

"Why?"

"Because there may be things in my books which you cannot see."

She held up her blue books, and he, holding up his diary, said:

"And in this too, perhaps. You are right. Let us sit just apart, opposite one another. We will read only what we wish to read."

"And we can skip."

"Certainly," said he; "begin."

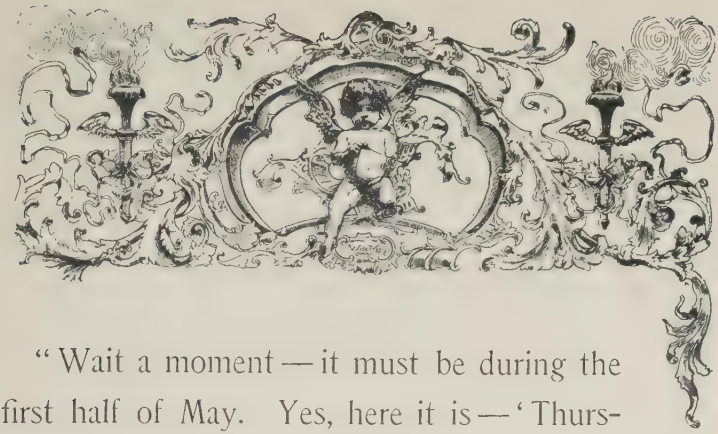
"No, do you begin, to give me courage."

"Very well; but where shall I begin?"

"Well," she replied, "where I begin."

"No, I must begin somewhat before you; I must begin where Jupiter begins."

"You are quite right; see where Jupiter begins, then."



"Wait a moment — it must be during the first half of May. Yes, here it is — 'Thursday, May 15th Went to Cheri's to see Jupiter, dark bay horse seven years old. Remarks in catalogue: Excellent saddle horse, high action, leaps well, has been ridden by a lady. Is to be sold May 21st. Highly recommended by d'Estilly.' And two pages further on: 'Saturday, May 17th. Saw Jupiter. The horse seems very good. Will go as high as 2500 francs.' And finally, four pages further, 'Wednesday, May 21st.'"

"The day we met in the train. I recollect the date."

"Yes, you are right. 'Wednesday, May 21st. To the War Office. To my sister's. Bought Jupiter, 1900 francs. On the way home, in the train, enchanting young girl seated opposite me.'"

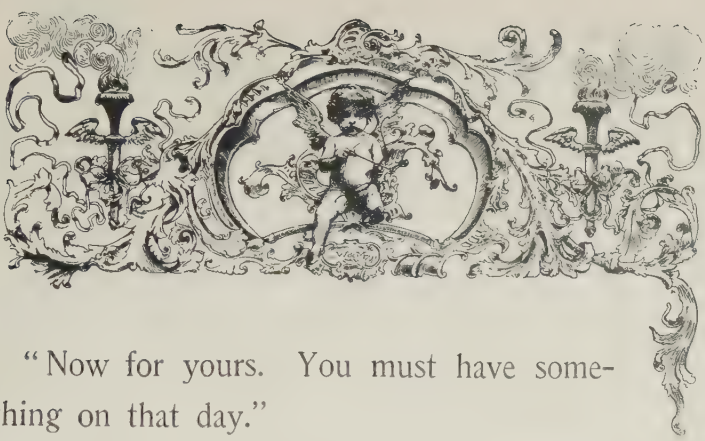
"Is that there? You are not making up a little for politeness' sake?"

"I am not making up at all."

"Let me see."

"Here, look."

"Yes, I see. Enchanting — it is there; enchanting."



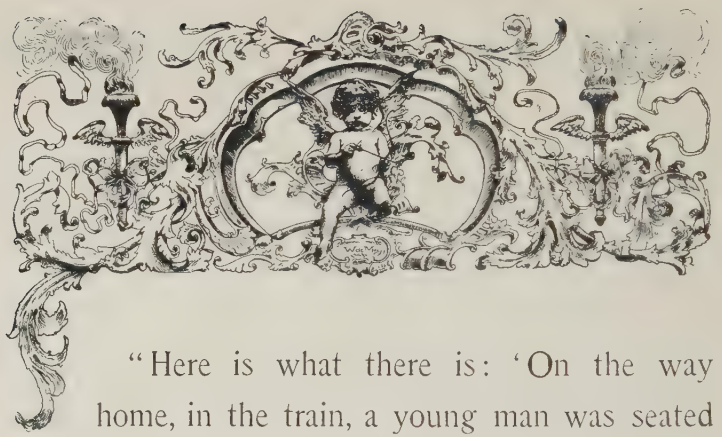
"Now for yours. You must have something on that day."

"I should hope not! Do you suppose that I wrote, 'On the way home in the train enchanting young man seated opposite me'?"

"No, not 'enchanting young man,' but look all the same."

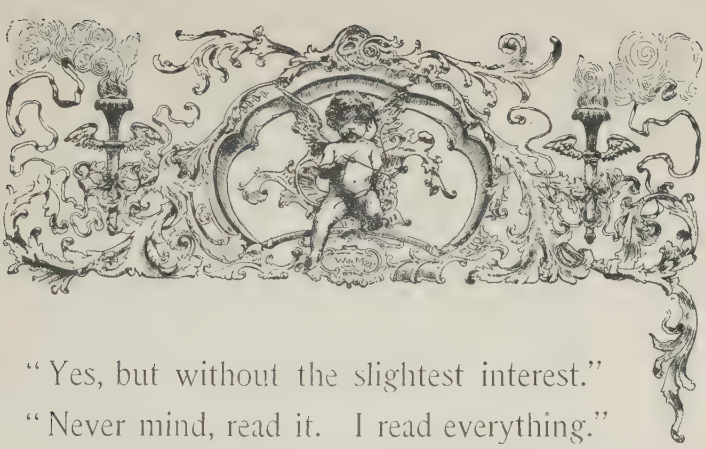
"It is only to ease my conscience. Let me see. 'Wednesday, May 21st. To the Louvre — to my aunt's — to the Salon.' There is nothing, I tell you. Ah, yes; I see something!"

"I was very sure of it. You had noticed me."



"Here is what there is: 'On the way home, in the train, a young man was seated opposite me. He looked at me all the way, all the whole way. Whenever I raised my eyes he would lower his; but when I lowered mine he would raise his again; and after Chatou I did not dare to look up at all, I was so conscious that he was looking at me. I had an English novel in my bag; I took it and began to read, but in the evening I was obliged to go all over again what I thought I had read in the cars.'"

"That is not all. I think there is something else."



"Yes, but without the slightest interest."

"Never mind, read it. I read everything."

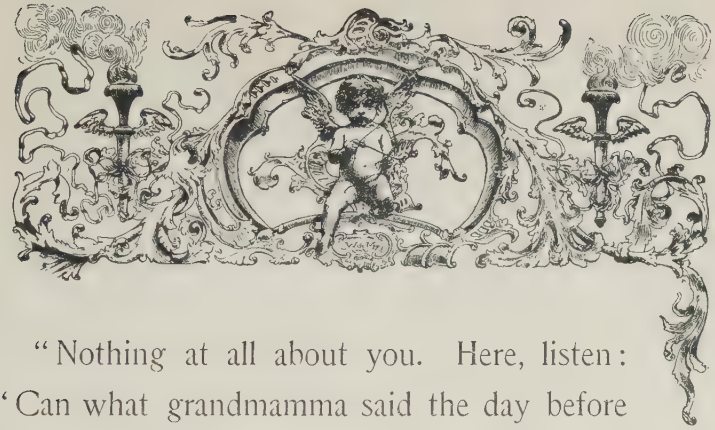
"Oh, you — you — I see how it will be! With you, it will always be little notes, short and dry; while with me there will be details and amplification. I will explain to you why. When Mlle. Guizard, my governess, left me, she said to me: 'My dear child, you do not write at all badly, but you must continue to work; scales are necessary for style just as for the piano. Make it a habit to write three or four pages every evening, on any subject you choose — about your day, about the

visits you have received or returned, and the like.' And then I did what Mlle. Guizard recommended."

"Very good."

"No, I wish to explain myself distinctly upon this point because, I repeat, I know what will happen. In a few moments you will fancy that you see warmth of sentiment and outbursts of passion where there are nothing but exercises in French composition. I do not wish you to be mistaken."

"I shall not be mistaken; but what is there after, 'He looked at me all the time'?"

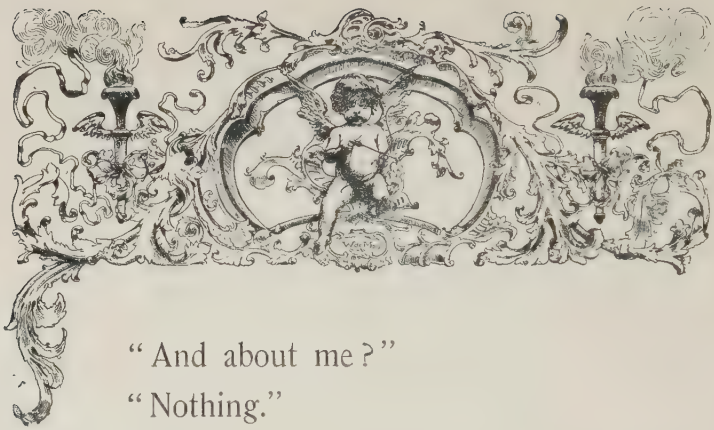


"Nothing at all about you. Here, listen: 'Can what grandmamma said the day before yesterday be true?—"It is extraordinary! This little Jeanne has suddenly become very pretty."' And then a long conversation between mamma and grandmamma; mamma reproached grandmamma for saying such things to me, for making me vain. There is nothing of interest, I tell you. Go on."

"I have nothing on the 22d."

"Nor I either."

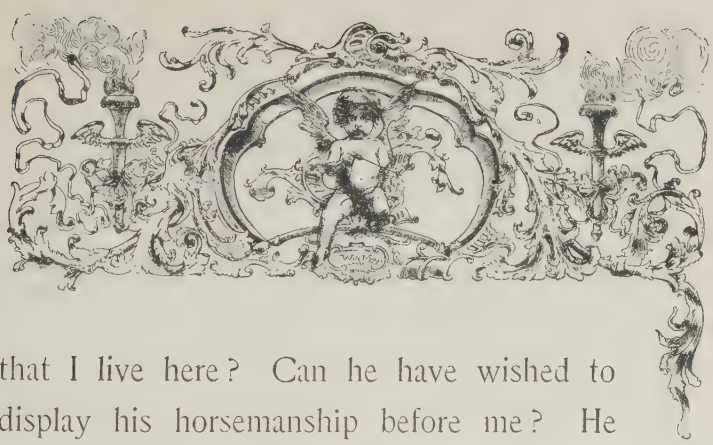
"'May 23d. Jupiter came. Tried the horse on the terrace and in the forest. I think him excellent.'"



"And about me?"

"Nothing."

"Ah! that is rather humiliating, for I have something about you on the 23d. 'The young man who looked at me on the train the day before yesterday is a soldier. He passed a little while ago on horseback in uniform. He had three silver stripes upon his sleeve. I say that he passed, but he did more than that. What I am going to write is absurd, but still, since it is for myself alone that I am writing — can he really have noticed me in the train? Can he have inquired about me? Can he have learned

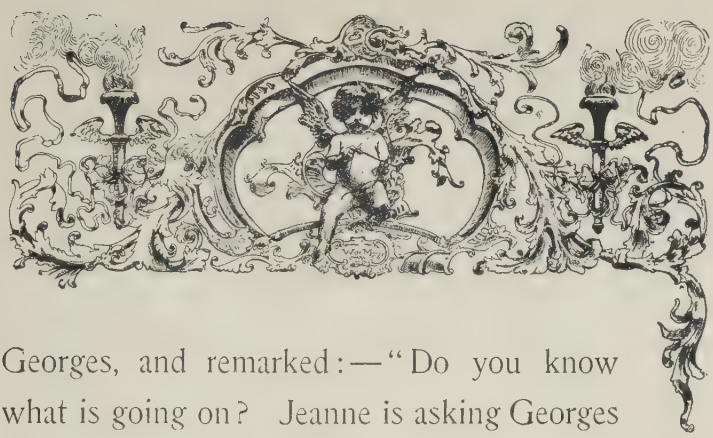


that I live here? Can he have wished to display his horsemanship before me? He remained at least an hour there on the terrace, between the Pavilion of Henry IV. and the gate, putting his horse through his paces, making him pirouette, change foot, volte, and all the rest of it. It would be a very vulgar thing to attempt to fascinate me by such means.'"

"What an injustice! You see it there in my diary, 'Tried Jupiter.' I was trying Jupiter, and I discovered that he had received a very brilliant education. But no matter; go on."

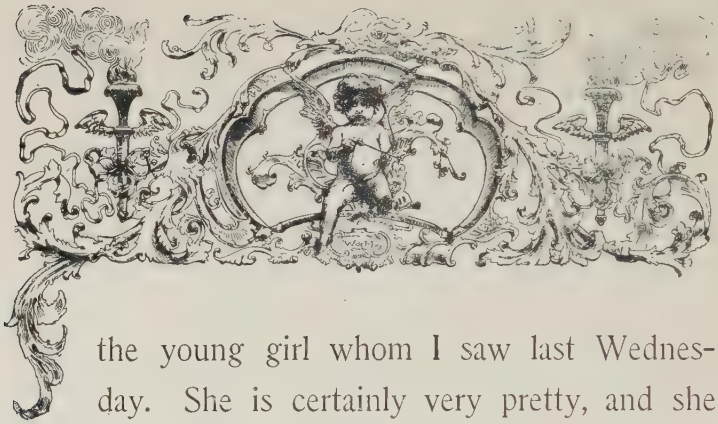
"'That evening after dinner I said to Georges, who, in spite of his twelve years, still spends his time in playing with lead soldiers, and who is very expert in military matters,—"Georges, what officer is it that has three silver stripes upon his sleeve?" "It is a captain." "Is it a fine thing to be a captain?" "That depends. It is a fine thing at five-and-twenty, but a poor one at fifty."

"'Five-and-twenty; he may be a little more than that, but not much. Grandmamma, who has sharp ears, had heard my conversation with



Georges, and remarked:—"Do you know what is going on? Jeanne is asking Georges for information about the army." I became red as a peony. From this came a long discussion. Grandmamma declared that she had a liking for the army, and mamma cried that she could never make up her mind to give me to a gentleman who would drag me about from garrison to garrison. I wonder why I write all this nonsense in this book. Oh, yes, to obey Mlle. Guizard!' There, you see, it is written. It is your turn; I have finished."

"On the 24th, two lines. 'Met in the forest



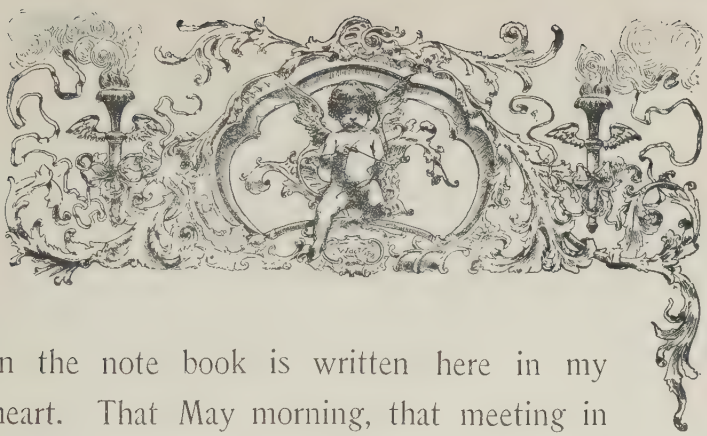
the young girl whom I saw last Wednesday. She is certainly very pretty, and she does not ride badly.'"

"Is that all? How concise it is! It needs a short commentary."

"Here is the commentary, my love. You are right; my notes are frightfully dry, but if I were not afraid of appearing to wish to say pretty things to you—"

"Do not be afraid of that; there is no one here."

"I would tell you that all that is not written

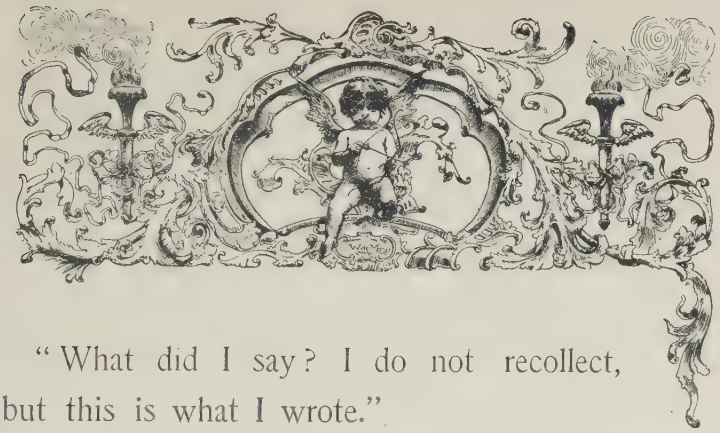


in the note book is written here in my heart. That May morning, that meeting in the forest — to-day, after the lapse of two years, I recollect it all, and in its smallest details. We had manœuvred from five to seven o'clock on the plain of Loges in a horrible dust. I marched my squadron back to the quarters, changed my horse, and set out again on Jupiter."

"Dear Jupiter!"

"A quarter of an hour later I was galloping up a long, gentle slope near Le Val. I saw a little troop coming, you on Jenny, Georges on his roan

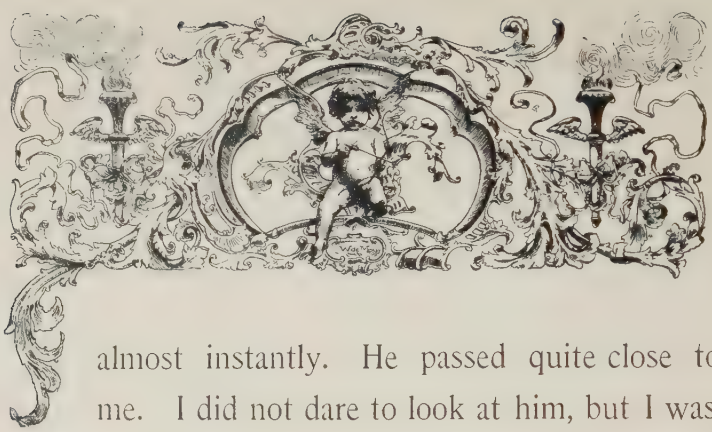
pony, and old Louis behind on a tall grey horse. You see I recollect even the colour of the horses. Suddenly, at fifty yards from you, I was fairly dazzled. I recognized you. Sharply, roughly, I brought poor Jupiter to a walk. The little troop passed near me. I can see you now with your grey habit, your black hat, and the blonde locks curling beneath your veil. And as you passed, I said to myself: — 'No, really, there is nothing in the world more charming than this young girl.' And what did you say to yourself?"



"What did I say? I do not recollect, but this is what I wrote."

And in a voice which trembled somewhat, for she had been greatly touched by the short commentary, Jeanne read as follows:

"'I met him this morning near Le Val. He was coming on at a gallop, and suddenly, when he recognized me, he stopped his horse. Yes, when he recognized me. I saw the movement distinctly. I know what it is to stop a horse going at a gallop. One warns him. Well, he stopped his horse without preparation, brutally, all at once,

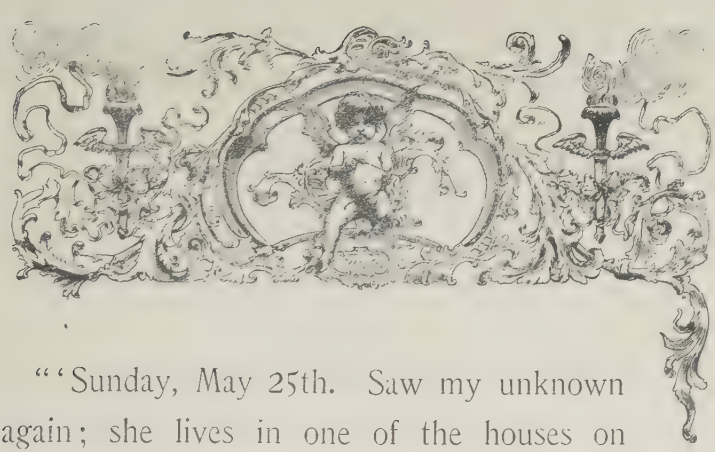


almost instantly. He passed quite close to me. I did not dare to look at him, but I was conscious that he was looking at me. He was not ten paces from us when that stupid little Georges said to me, "Oh, Jeanne, did you see him? How funny he was with all that dust! He looked like a pierrot. He is a captain in the 21st. The number 21 was on the collar of his uniform."

"'I was furious at Georges. If only he did not hear!'"

"I did hear. I recollect now."

"Come, read on. It is your turn."

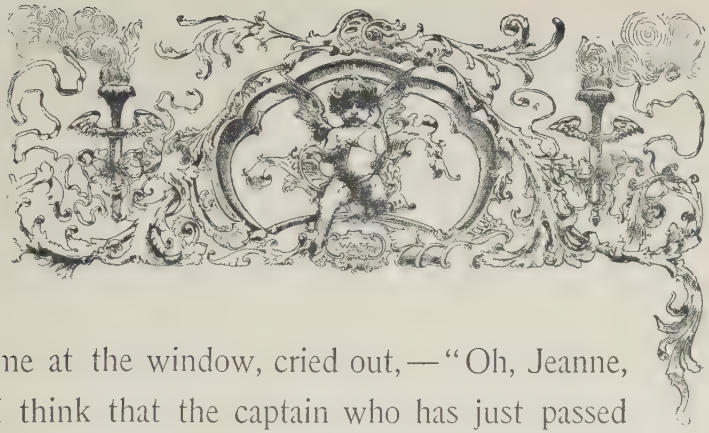


"'Sunday, May 25th. Saw my unknown again; she lives in one of the houses on the terrace. I was driving past; she was at the window; she saw me, and it seemed to me that it was because she saw me that she left the window suddenly, very suddenly. Good heavens, how charming she is!'"

"Come, that is a shade less dry than it was a while ago. There is an improvement. You put in verbs. You are beginning to write."

"That is perhaps because I was beginning to be in love. It is your turn."

"'May 25th. I was at the window; I saw coming a pretty little English cart, all glittering in the sunlight, and drawn by a love of a pony, as black as ink; on the seat was a tiny groom in irreproachable livery, and beside the groom was he, the captain. I ought to have remained quietly at the window, but I could not. I said to myself, "I shall look at him, and he will perceive that I am looking at him." I was frightened; I fled to the other end of the room. Grandmamma said, "What is the matter with you, Jeanne?" "Nothing at all, grandmamma." Georges, who was with



me at the window, cried out,—"Oh, Jeanne, I think that the captain who has just passed is the pierrot of yesterday morning!"'"

"I was the pierrot?"

"You were the pierrot. On the 26th of May I have nothing, absolutely nothing. Oh, you can read! There is nothing about you. 'Tried on my pink gown. It fitted well, but there were not enough little tucks. I had some added;' and so on. I was thinking of nothing but my new gown. You see that I was not so much absorbed."

"Well, the 26th was a great day for me; it

was the day when Picot distinguished himself. I have only two lines here, but they are eloquent. 'Gave twenty francs to Picot. He is a profound diplomatist.'"

"This is the place, if ever, for a new commentary."

"Willingly. That morning at breakfast at mess I had said to Dubrisay, who is always wandering on horseback in the forest, 'Do you not know a young girl who rides with a little fellow of twelve and an old servant?' 'Wait a moment; the young girl rides a black mare.' 'And the old

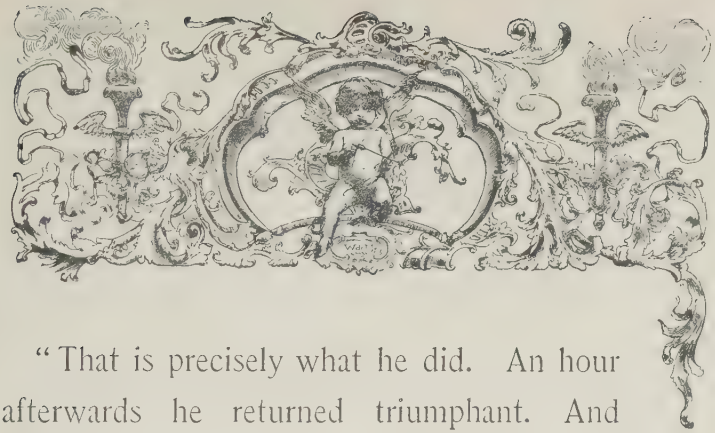
servant, a grey horse,' said another of these gentlemen. 'And the boy, a roan pony,' added a third. Thereupon there was a great discussion over the merits of the horses. The roan pony appeared excellent and the black mare somewhat worn out."

"It was true, happily!"

"Oh, yes, happily! Then I replied, 'I am not talking about the horses, but about the young girl.' And all three replied that they never looked at anything but the horses. Much progress I had made! I returned to my quarters. About three

o'clock I saw Picot, my orderly, lounging in the court. I called him from the window. Picot is a Parisian, and very sharp. I said to him, 'Picot, try to find out adroitly who are the people who live in such and such a house upon the terrace. The entrance is in the Rue des Arcades.' 'Very good, captain.' 'But adroitly, you understand.' 'Yes, captain.' 'If you find out anything, you can tell it to me to-morrow morning at quarters.'"

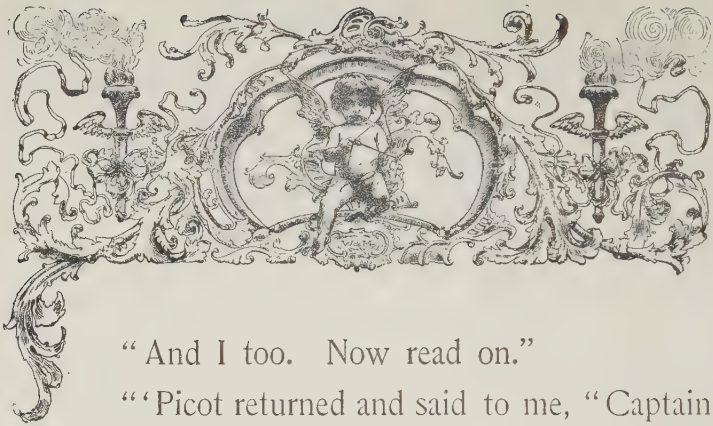
"You were not very impatient. You might have told him to come back at once."



"That is precisely what he did. An hour afterwards he returned triumphant. And then Picot delivered so extraordinary a discourse that I amused myself by transcribing it as exactly as possible in the little diary."

"'I amused myself'! What a cowardly evasion! Tell the truth! Confess that it was not disagreeable to you to write things in which I was in question, and then perhaps I will confess myself that it was not disagreeable to me to write things in which you—"

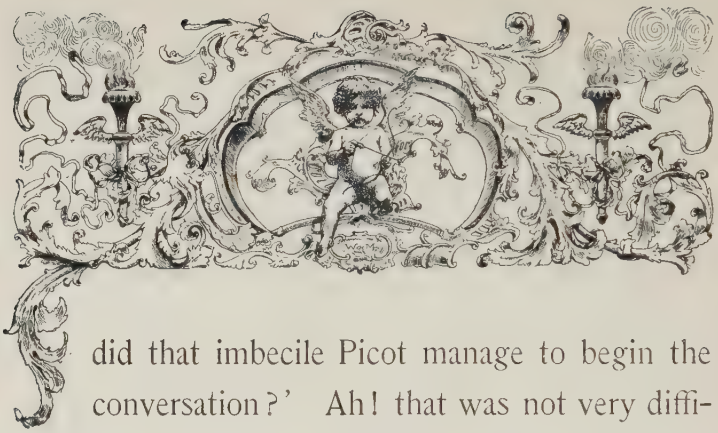
"Well, I confess it."



"And I too. Now read on."

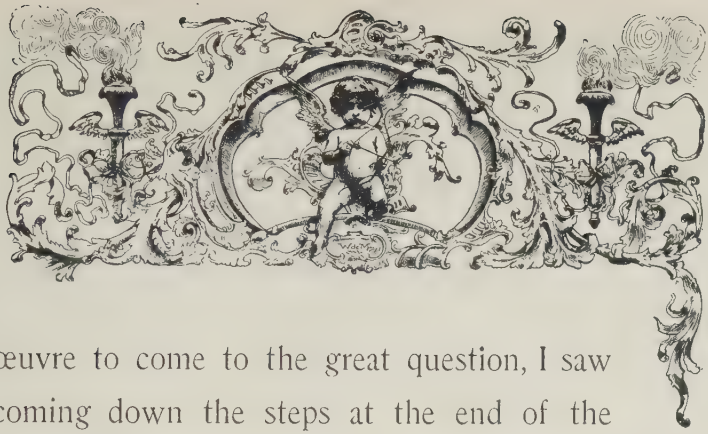
"'Picot returned and said to me, "Captain, I know everything. Only, I beg of you, when once I have begun, do not interrupt me with questions, because that confuses me. I have been repeating my lesson all the way back that I might not forget it. The house was rented three weeks ago by Parisians. The head of the family is a M. Lablinière, a manufacturer; he makes steam-engines, telegraphs, and the like. He is there with his mother-in-law, his wife, and his two children: a young girl (nineteen years old) and a boy (twelve

years old). Wait a moment: I know the names of the children — Jeanne and Georges. They are rich, very rich. Five horses in the stable, three carriages, four men servants, a cook, three maids: Julie, Adelai — but I don't suppose that you care for the names of the maids, captain. Their address in Paris is 28 Boulevard Haussmann. How did I learn all that? By talking to the porter. No, no! do not interrupt me; it would upset me. I see what disturbs you, captain. You think that I have been stupid, that I told him I was sent by you. Not at all. You are asking yourself, 'How



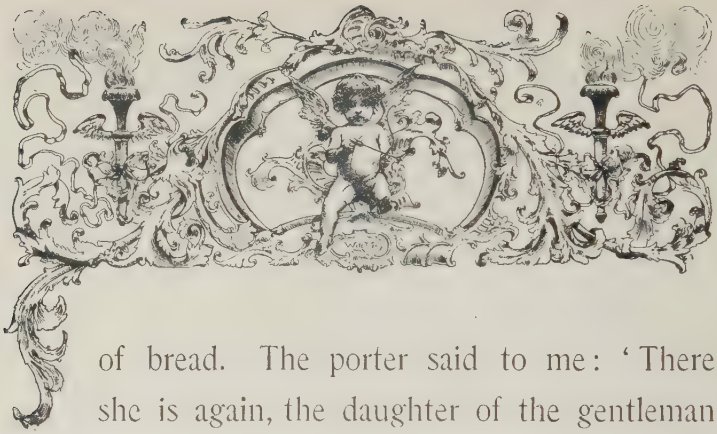
did that imbecile Picot manage to begin the conversation?' Ah! that was not very difficult, captain. There was no great merit in it. The porter was before his door. I came up to him slowly, with the air of a soldier who is lounging about aimlessly, and when I was just opposite him I went like this: 'Whew! how hot it is!' He replied: 'Oh! yes, it is hot.' I continued: 'Not quite so hot as yesterday, however.' He replied: 'No, because there is a little breeze.'

"'"That started it; the ice was broken; we began to chat. Just as I was beginning to man-



œuvre to come to the great question, I saw coming down the steps at the end of the courtyard a devilish pretty young lady — I beg pardon, captain — with a great bit of bread in her hand. I said to the porter, 'Is that your mistress?' He replied; 'No; it is the daughter of the tenant, a gentleman from Paris.'

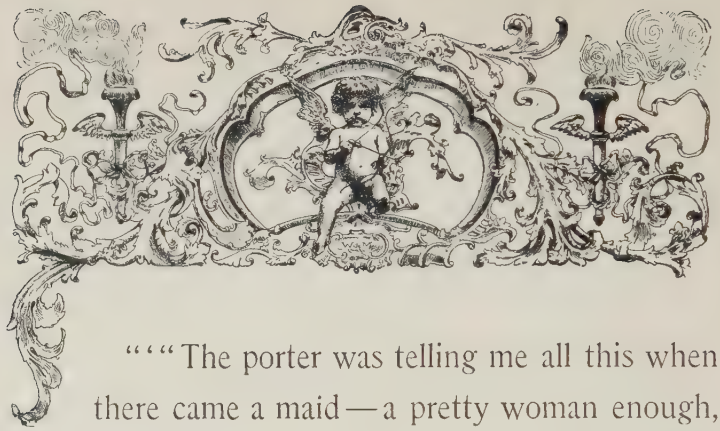
"'"Then he told me all that I have just detailed to you. There was no merit in it, I repeat, captain. He went on of his own accord, did this porter. He was still going on when I saw the young lady crossing the courtyard without her bit



of bread. The porter said to me: 'There she is again, the daughter of the gentleman from Paris. Every day she goes and gives bread to her horse in the stable.'

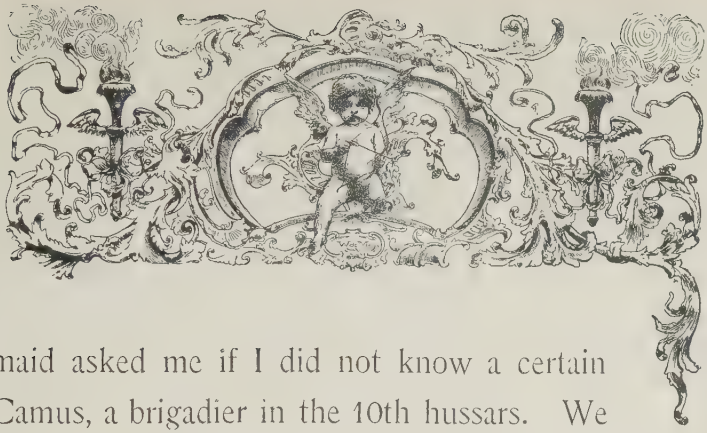
"'"Meanwhile the young lady was going back up the steps, but very slowly and looking at me. She seemed astonished at seeing me there; she appeared to be saying to herself: 'What in the world is that chasseur doing here?' She went back into the house. During this time the porter was praising this young lady — oh, how he praised her! — because she was so sweet, so good, and

not only to the horses but to people. For instance, when they arrived three weeks ago the porter's little girl was ill. Well, would you believe it, this young lady — but, I beg your pardon, captain; perhaps all these details do not interest you. They do interest you? Very good, then I will go on. I was saying to you that she came to see this porter's little girl every day, and sent her soup and good things to eat; she brought her with her own hands playthings and bon-bons; she would sometimes stay a quarter of an hour at a time in the lodge telling this child stories!



"'"The porter was telling me all this when there came a maid—a pretty woman enough, captain, by your leave. She said to the porter: 'Is there not a letter for mademoiselle?' 'Oh, no; you know very well that I send up the letters for mademoiselle at once.' But I said to myself: 'Perhaps one might learn something from the maid.' Then I began again; 'It is warm, mademoiselle.' 'Oh, yes.' I continued; 'Not quite so warm as yesterday.'

"'"It succeeded just as well as with the porter, and the conversation began all over again. The



maid asked me if I did not know a certain Camus, a brigadier in the 10th hussars. We were chatting away when suddenly she cried: 'Oh, I must go! mademoiselle is waiting for me.' 'And will your mistress be angry, will she scold you?' 'My mistress be angry, scold me? No, indeed! There is nobody in the world better than mademoiselle.'"'"

"That is all?"

"Yes, it is all."

"So you set spies upon me."

"Precisely; but your story of the 26th?"

"Here it is. 'Tuesday, May 27th. Yesterday, in the afternoon, I went to take some bread to Nelly. As I went down the steps I saw a soldier talking to the porter. I remained in the stable five minutes; when I came out I looked; the soldier was still there. I returned to my room and found Julie there. Oh, when curiosity takes possession of one, it is horrible! I said to Julie, "I expect a letter from Paris; go and see if it is not at the porter's lodge. She went. I waited. Julie did not return. I went into my dressing-room, which opens on the court. I saw Julie;

she was talking to this soldier. At last she returned. "There was no letter, mademoiselle." "You were gone very long." "Oh, no, mademoiselle." "Yes, I saw you; you were talking to a hussar." "A hussar! oh, no, mademoiselle." "But I saw you." "I was not talking to a hussar, mademoiselle — it was a chasseur; there is a difference in the uniform. Hussars have white braid and chasseurs black; hussars have a collar like the dolman and chasseurs have a red collar." "How do you know all that, Julie?" "I have a cousin in the hussars, mademoiselle; here at

Saint Germain there are no hussars, there are only chasseurs; two regiments, the 21st and 22d, which are brigaded together. The soldier who was there was a chasseur of the 21st."

"'The twenty-first! His regiment! My military conversation with Julie was destined to have deplorable results. About six o'clock we went with mamma to take a turn on foot upon the terrace. We met two officers of chasseurs. Mamma said to me, "Those hussars have pretty horses."

"'I replied thoughtlessly, "Those are not hussars, mamma, they are chasseurs; hussars have white

braid and chasseurs black; hussars have a collar like the dol—"

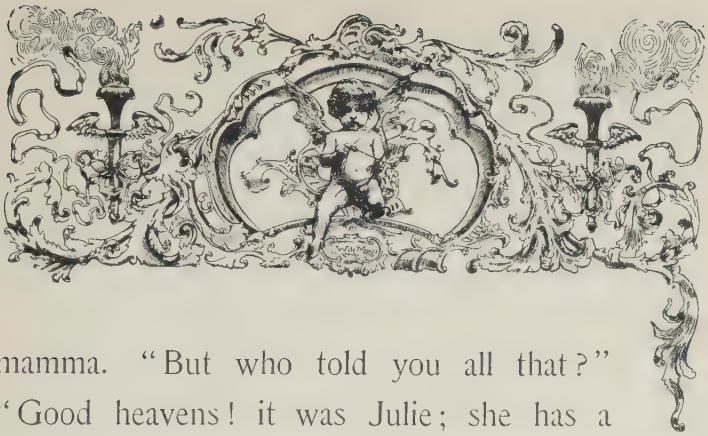
"'I did not finish. I looked at mamma; she was stupefied. "How do you know all that?" "Good heavens! mamma, from Julie. She has a cousin in the hussars. So one day when she was dressing my hair—"

"'"Singular subject of conversation," said mamma.

"'We said nothing more. But all was not over. Papa returned from Paris; we went to dinner, and papa told us that he had met an

officer in the train. Suppose it was he! A colonel—it was not he! Papa spent a month with this colonel at Cauterets last year. They played whist together. They renewed their acquaintance in the train. Papa has invited him to dinner next week, for Wednesday, June 4th. I said to papa: "Is this colonel's regiment at Saint Germain?" "Yes, his regiment is here." "Is it the 21st or the 22d?" "Are there two regiments here?" "Yes, papa, the 21st and the 22d; they are brigaded together."

"'And there was papa still more amazed than



mamma. "But who told you all that?" "Good heavens! it was Julie; she has a cousin in the hussars." "I cannot understand it at all," said mamma; "for some time Jeanne has talked of nothing but chasseurs and hussars." "Oh!" said grandmamma, "perhaps she has remarked some handsome officer."

"'I became scarlet. I replied impatiently, almost crossly. I am beginning to be seriously angry with this gentleman whom I do not know, whom I never shall know. Yes, I am angry with him for having broken in upon my life. Why did he

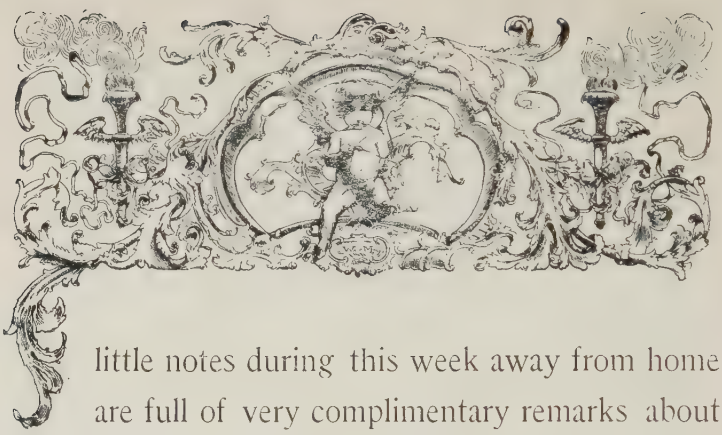
look at me in the train? Why did he come to do the *haute école* under my windows? Why did he bring his horse to a walk the other day when he saw me? If I meet him, as soon as I recognize him I will set off at a gallop, at full gallop. Alas! a full gallop does not suit my poor Nelly very well now; she is growing old. And so papa is going to give me another horse for my birthday.

"'I should like to know whether it is his colonel who is to dine here on Wednesday, June 4th.'"

This was the last phrase in the entry under May 27th. Then she turned over a dozen pages of her journal.

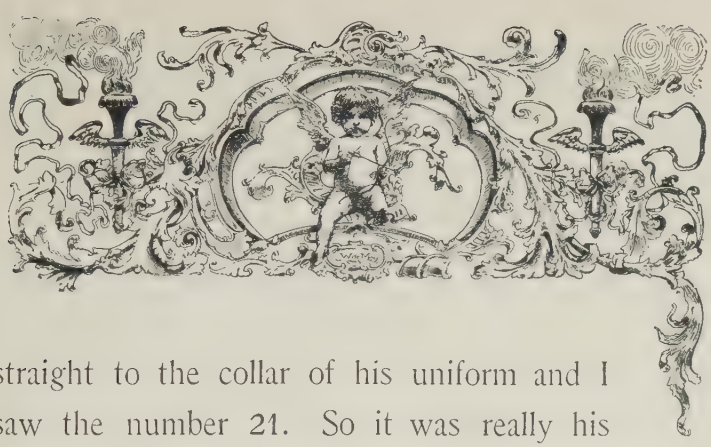
"From May 28th to June 3d there is absolutely nothing about you."

"Nor anything about you in this," he replied. "That is because we had the unhappiness not to see one another during that week. I was not at Saint Germain. We had gone off, some twenty officers of the two regiments with the general and the colonels, for the manœuvres between Vernon and Rouen. I had taken Jupiter, and my



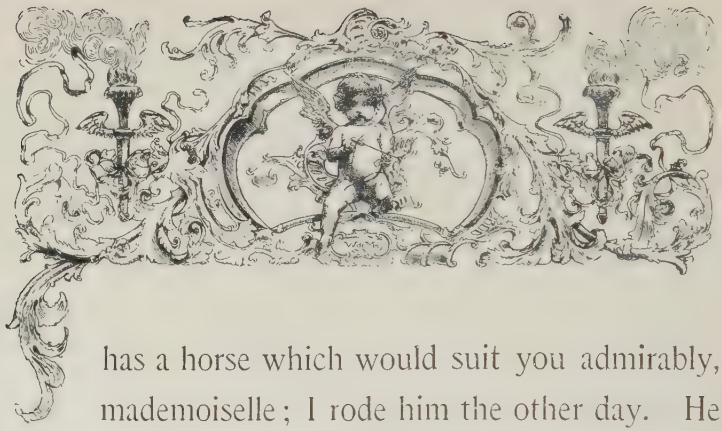
little notes during this week away from home are full of very complimentary remarks about my new horse: 'Jupiter irreproachable; strong, spirited, and gentle.' 'Yesterday the colonel rode Jupiter and thought him perfect,' etc., etc. On June 3d, at eight o'clock in the evening, we returned to Saint Germain, and on the 4th I had not forgotten you; see! look! There: 'Shall I see the little blonde of the terrace again?'"

"And here is my fourth of June: 'I know his name. We had the colonel at dinner this evening. He came at seven o'clock. My eyes went



straight to the collar of his uniform and I saw the number 21. So it was really his colonel. During dinner the conversation was perfectly uninteresting, but afterwards, as I was pouring the coffee, papa said: "Colonel, you can do me a service, perhaps. I want to give a horse to this young person, and if you know of a good animal, very gentle—"

"'I began to protest. "Not too gentle, colonel; I ride very well." (And it is true, I do ride very well.) "I will see," replied the colonel; "I will inquire. Ah! one of the officers of my regiment



has a horse which would suit you admirably, mademoiselle; I rode him the other day. He is perfect." "If he would let me have him," said papa, "with a good profit." "Oh! this officer would be altogether indifferent to a good profit; he is rich, very rich. It is a captain, M. de Léonelle." "A captain and rich?" cried Georges; "perhaps it is the officer whom we saw the other day in an English cart with a black pony." "That is he, precisely." "Oh! my sister and I know him well; we have met him several times—"

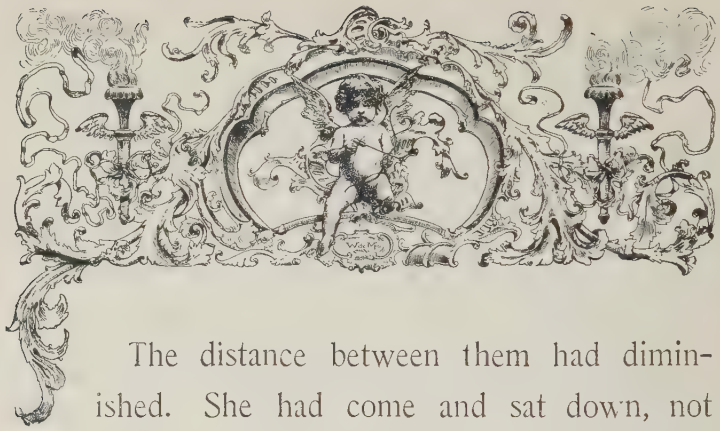
"'This time I felt my cheeks in a flame, literally

in a flame. The colonel looked at me. I must have been crimson. He surely perceived it. He left us at ten o'clock, and as he went he said to me: "I will speak to M. de Léonelle to-morrow morning, but I greatly fear that I shall not succeed. He adores his horse."

"'That is how matters stand. Am I going to buy his horse? Papa has given me a credit of three thousand francs.'"

"Now we come to the decisive day, the scene in the photographer's, at the fete."

"And your first visit. Begin."

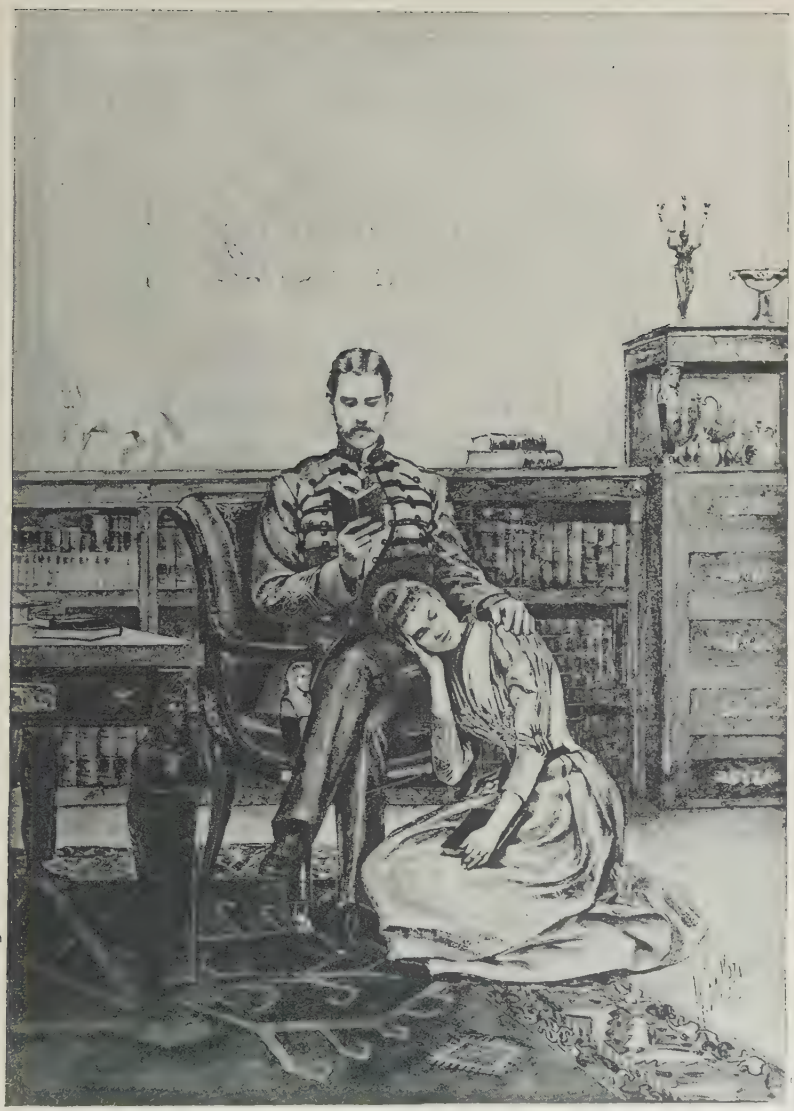


The distance between them had diminished. She had come and sat down, not upon his knee, but upon a little stool at his feet; and while he was reading she would lean her head lovingly against his knees, so that, profiting by the advantages of the ground, — he controlled the situation, — the captain began to kiss Jeanne with a certain vivacity. She disengaged herself, but not at once.

"Come, stop," said she; "stop and begin."

He began.

"'Thursday, June 5th. This morning after the



manœuvres we were returning at a walk along the Avenue de Loges. The adjutant came to call me to the colonel. I joined him at the head of the column. "Captain," said he, "you do not happen to wish to sell your new horse?" "Certainly not, colonel." "Not even with a good profit?" "Not even with a good profit." "It was for a very pretty person, and one who knows you." "Who knows me, colonel?" "Yes; she has met you several times, and she has seen you on the terrace; at any rate she appeared to know you, and I even thought I observed that when I

pronounced your name yesterday she blushed; blushed in a very perceptible manner." "And who is it, colonel?" "It is the daughter of an engineer, a M. Lablinière." "A blonde, colonel?" "Yes, a blonde." "Who lives in a house upon the terrace?" "Precisely; you see that you know her." "Only by sight, colonel." "Well, see whether you are willing to give up your horse to this pretty blonde. Au revoir, captain."

"'Sell Jupiter? To any one else, never! To her? I hesitate. She is so pretty! So she blushed when she heard my name? The colonel

must have dreamed. Why should she have blushed? Why?

"'My sister Louise arrived at eleven o'clock. She came to invite herself to breakfast with her children. It was the day of the fete at Saint Germain, and after breakfast the children asked to go and see the booths. "Uncle, if there is a photographer you will have our pictures taken." I agreed to this.

"'Sure enough, there was a photographer. We went into his little house. She was there with her brother, her mother, and a great black poodle.

The brother was on his knees upon the ground beside the black poodle, trying to persuade him to remain quiet. "Come, Bob, do not move, we want to have your picture taken."

"'But Bob paid no attention to the prayers of the little boy who, losing courage, said: "Speak to him, Jeanne; speak to him; nobody but you can make him mind. And speak to him in English; he understands English a great deal better than French." "No, Georges, you are absurd." "Jeanne, dear Jeanne."

"'She yielded; and, looking at Monsieur Bob

very severely, said: "Now, Bob, Master Bob, be obedient! Look at me, so! Now be still! Hush! Still!"

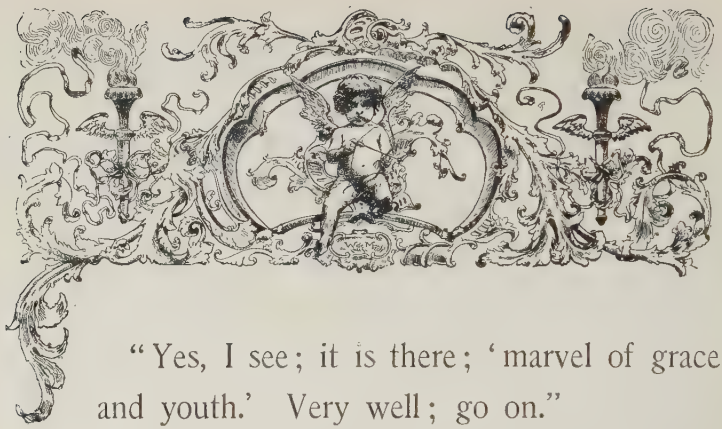
"'She certainly can make the black poodle mind. He remained motionless. Her voice is charming. And her face! I gazed at it there at my ease in the full light. She is a marvel of grace and youth.'"

"Wait a moment, let me see."

"Why?"

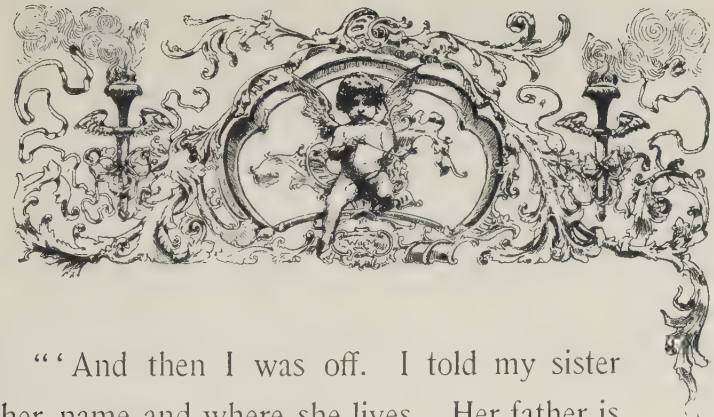
"I still believe in the little embellishments."

"You are wrong; look!"



"Yes, I see; it is there; 'marvel of grace and youth.' Very well; go on."

"'She shall have Jupiter! As she left she said to my sister (it seemed to me that there was a trace of emotion in her voice), "I beg your pardon, madame, for having made you wait." I ought to have found something to say; but no, I could think of nothing. I was absurd. I bowed. She made me a slight inclination of the head. She went out of the photographer's house. "What an enchanting girl," said my sister. "Ah, yes! indeed."



"'And then I was off. I told my sister her name and where she lives. Her father is an engineer of the highest merit, etc., etc. I felt an imperative need of talking about her. My sister was amazed. "But you are in love!" "In love! no." "Yes, you are in love. I must inquire about them. She will make me a very pretty sister-in-law."

"'I took Louise back to the train. No, I was not in love. But she should have Jupiter! Only, one thing made me anxious. Yes, Cheri's catalogue certainly said — Has been ridden by a lady.

But it would not do to trust to the statements in a catalogue. Poor, dear child! Suppose an accident were to happen to her! I had a side-saddle at my quarters. My sister sometimes came to ride with me. I said to Picot; "Put the side-saddle on Jupiter and take him to the riding school. Take along a sheet."

"'A quarter of an hour afterwards I was making Picot ride Jupiter on a side-saddle; I had wrapped his legs in the sheet to represent the skirt of the habit. Jupiter set off at a gallop.

"Ah, captain, he understands it perfectly," cried Picot; "he has been ridden by a lady."

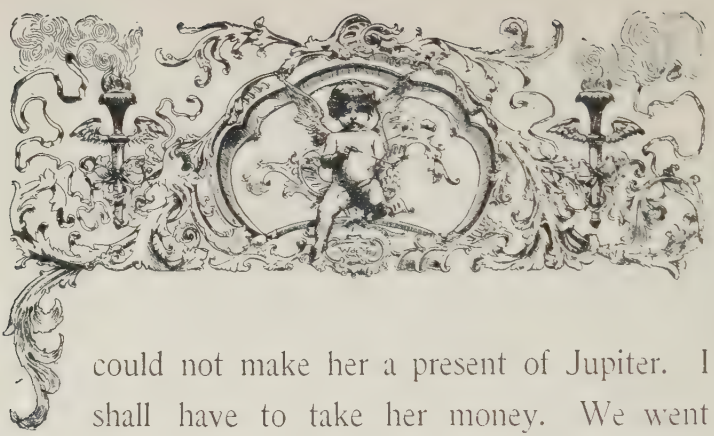
"'I wished to try it myself. I mounted Jupiter in my turn like a lady, with my knees wound in the sheet. I trotted Jupiter and galloped him, and while I was trotting and galloping, I said to myself: When I think that if I am here in this ridiculous position and bedizenment it is because I met in a train two weeks ago a little blonde who was reading an English novel!

"'Well, evidently, Jupiter could be ridden by a lady. She should have Jupiter! Yes, but how

should I give him to her? It would have been the correct thing to place the horse at the disposal of my colonel. No, I resolved to go at once to her house myself. I set out. Picot followed me, leading Jupiter. We arrived; we entered the court-yard. I looked at Picot; he had an amused look; he was saying to himself: "Ah, ha! that is why the captain sent me to make inquiries."

"'I rang. "Monsieur Lablinière?" "He is at Paris." "Madame Lablinière?" "She is here." "Send up my card. Say that I have come about a horse."

"'The servant went to announce me. Suppose she were not to be there! I went in. She was there! with her mother, her grandmother, her little brother, and her black poodle. I do not know what happened after that. I must have been absurd. I recollect indistinctly that something was said about a pelham and a sliding martingale. I believe I told her that the horse was named Jupiter; and I left, begging her to keep Jupiter and to try him for a week or a fortnight. Of course it was also necessary to speak of the price. At this the words burned my lips. And yet I



could not make her a present of Jupiter. I shall have to take her money. We went down into the court, and there, standing beside Jupiter, we had another conversation, as absurd, as silly, as the conversation in the drawing-room. I was dying to say to this charming creature: "You are an angel and I adore you." And I did say to her, "The horse must have twelve quarts of oats," etc., etc. I perpetrated the most astonishing platitudes. I said to her, I recollect now, that the horse was built for a light weight and that he would be happier with her than with me. I must have

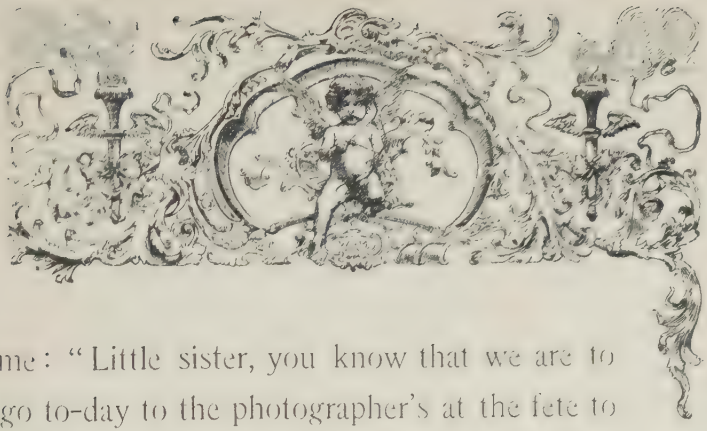
made a disastrous impression upon her with such remarks. Finally I left with Picot; and my head was turned so topsy-turvy that I talked to Picot all the way home for the sake of speaking about her. And it stirred my heart pleasantly when Picot said to me: "The pretty blonde had a curious way of looking at me I think that she recognized me. She took a good look at me the day when I went to pump the porter. It was the pretty blonde, captain, who was so good to the little sick girl."'"

"Good Picot! He really had something to do with bringing about our marriage."

"Yes, that is true; he was the first to give me a very good account of you."

"And I had no account of you at all, yet I was beginning to love you without any account. Listen, you shall judge."

"'Thursday, June 5th. Events are crowding upon each other fast; good heavens! how will it all end? I have his horse. He is named Jupiter. He is there in the stable, between Nelly and Georges' pony. Let me try to put a little order into my poor head. How many things have happened to-day! After breakfast Georges said to



me: "Little sister, you know that we are to go to-day to the photographer's at the fete to have Bob's picture taken." "But you can go with mamma without me." "No: if you are not there Bob will not keep quiet."

"'I yielded; we set out and we came to the photographer's. Just as Bob was beginning to pose, I saw enter — whom? Him! and not alone, but with a lady, quite young and charming. Who is this lady? But here are two children. They call him uncle. It is his sister! Georges could not make Bob behave; then I was obliged to

play a ridiculous scene there before his eyes. I must have seemed to him a little idiot. I talked to Bob in English. I looked as though I was exhibiting a trained dog. I hurried away, all red with shame and confusion. I returned to the house, heart-broken, furious. I shut myself up in my room. Still, at five o'clock, I had to go down for tea.

"'I went down. I had hardly come in when Pierre brought up a card. "What is it?" said mamma. "Madame, it is an officer, a captain of chasseurs." "A captain of chasseurs! I do not

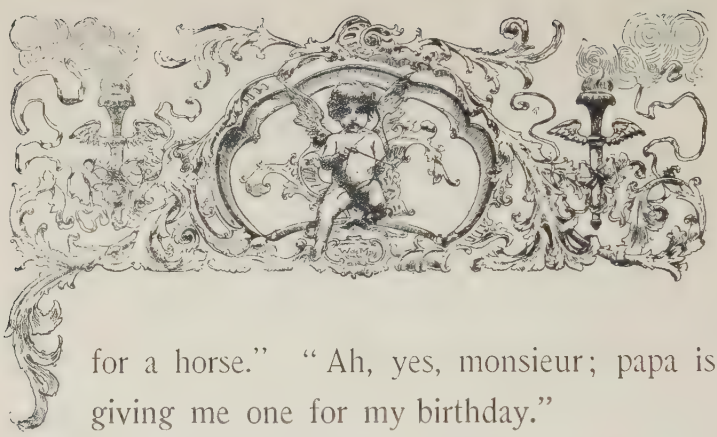
know any captain of chasseurs! I come to the country to be quiet, and the house is overrun with soldiers! A colonel yesterday, a captain to-day! To-morrow we shall have the whole regiment! What does this captain want?" "Madame, he told me that he had come about a horse." "Look at the card, Jeanne; but what is the matter with you? How red you are! You must have a rush of blood to the head." "No, mamma." "Well, look and read." I took the card and read, "Count Roger de Léonelle, captain in the 21st chasseurs." Count! he is a count!

That is all he needed! "Léonelle," cried Georges, "Why, that is the officer about Jeanne's horse." "True," said mamma, "the colonel did mention that name yesterday. And your father is not here! Well; we must receive the gentleman. Show him up, Pierre. Only, Jeanne, you will have to talk to him, for you know I do not understand anything about horses."

"'The door opened. It was he! He entered, he bowed, and mamma, after a phrase which was sufficiently amiable, but which might have been

more so, said to me: "Jeanne, it is about your horse, so ask the count — "

"'So there we were left to begin the conversation. All the weight of it fell upon me. He was charming in his grace, tact, and simplicity. And I was stupid, positively stupid. I felt dull, crushed, imbecile. I will try to recollect the terms of this conversation which must have given him so deplorable an idea of me. We were there, seated a couple of paces apart, I, happily, with my back to the light. "My colonel spoke to me this morning, mademoiselle, and told me that you were looking



for a horse." "Ah, yes, monsieur; papa is giving me one for my birthday."

"'How stupid that was! What need had I to tell him that? But words would not come to me; and then, in my embarrassment, I said anything that occurred to my mind. He went on. "I can place at your disposal a horse which will, I think, suit you perfectly." "I thank you, monsieur, but your colonel said yesterday that you were very fond of your horse, and I should not like—" "Oh! really, mademoiselle, he is an excellent horse, and if that were not so I should not

allow myself to offer him to you; but he is somewhat slender for me; a light weight will suit him better."

"'He was not telling the truth, for the colonel has ridden the horse and thought him excellent. And the colonel is not a light weight! He is enormous!!!

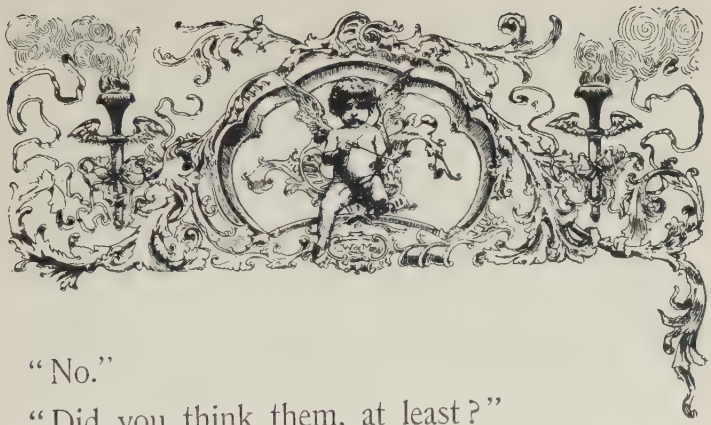
"'"A light weight will suit him better"! What a pretty thing, and said in such a well-bred and elegant fashion! One must carefully examine the hidden sense of this phrase. It means: You are delicate and light. You are a feather, you are a bird!

He added: "Our work is sometimes very hard, and the horse will be happier with you."

"'Happier with you!!! He pronounced this phrase with a kind of softness, almost tenderness. It was a roundabout way of saying to me: "One cannot help being happy with you. Every one must be happy with you, even a horse!"

"'Can anything be imagined more ingenious, more delicate!'"

And Jeanne, suddenly breaking off, said: "Then you were not conscious of the pretty things you said to me?"



"No."

"Did you think them, at least?"

"Yes."

"That is the essential point. I will go on.

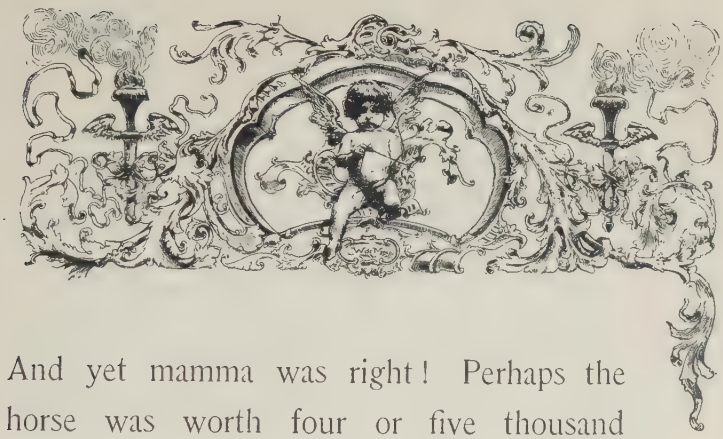
"'And I, to thank him, replied coldly: "Well, monsieur, I accept; when can I try the horse?" "Oh! I have brought him; he is here, mademoiselle. I will leave him with you. You can keep him to try a week, two weeks, as long as you like; one can never try a horse too thoroughly."

"'"Oh! you are too kind, monsieur; I will ride the horse to-morrow and papa will take you the

answer at once." "No, mademoiselle, I beg of you. Keep the horse at least two or three days before you decide. I shall not need him in the least." "Very well, as you please, monsieur; I am very grateful to you."

"'He rose, bowed, and was about to go out, when suddenly mamma said: "But Jeanne, you are forgetting a very important thing, the price of the horse."

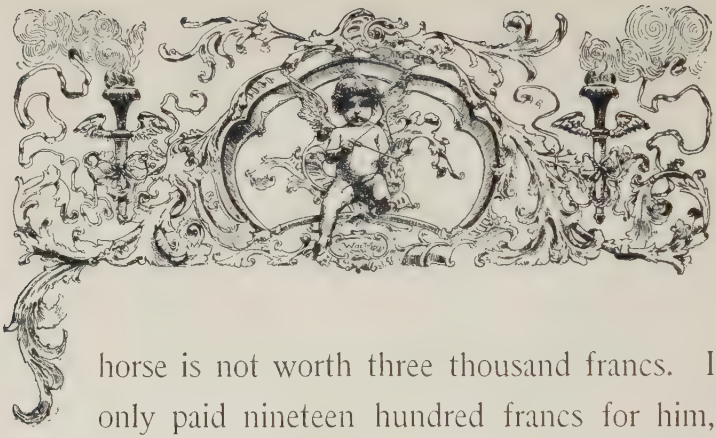
"'Oh! I love mamma, I love her dearly; I love her with all my heart; but, really, then, for a quarter of a second, not longer, I detested her!



And yet mamma was right! Perhaps the horse was worth four or five thousand francs, and then my credit would not have permitted me. But to have to discuss directly with him this wretched, this vile question of money! It filled me with disgust.

"'I began to say: "It is true, monsieur. There is the question of price."

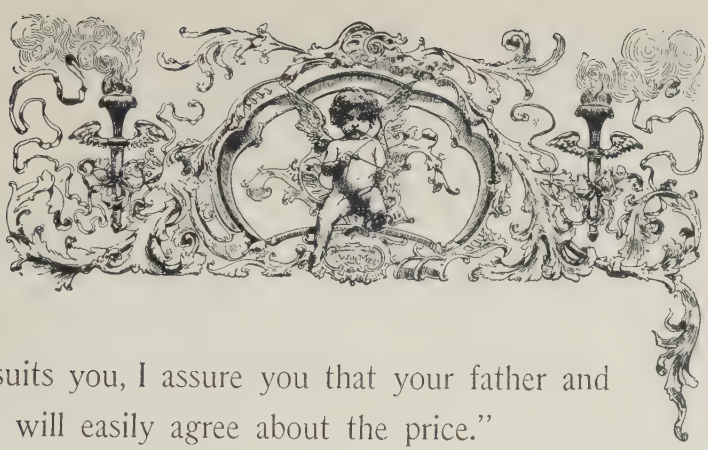
"'He happily came to my assistance. — "Oh! mademoiselle, the horse is not costly." — "You see, papa gives me only three thousand francs." — "Three thousand francs, mademoiselle! The



horse is not worth three thousand francs. I only paid nineteen hundred francs for him, and when one gets rid of a horse one is always prepared to lose something on it."

"'Ah! it was then that I said to myself: "But he loves me! he loves me!! He wishes to sell me at a loss this horse which he adores for the mere pleasure of selling it to me."

"'And I replied in my embarrassment: "Oh! really; you must have some little profit."—"I shall have a very great one, mademoiselle, if I have the happiness to oblige you. If the horse only

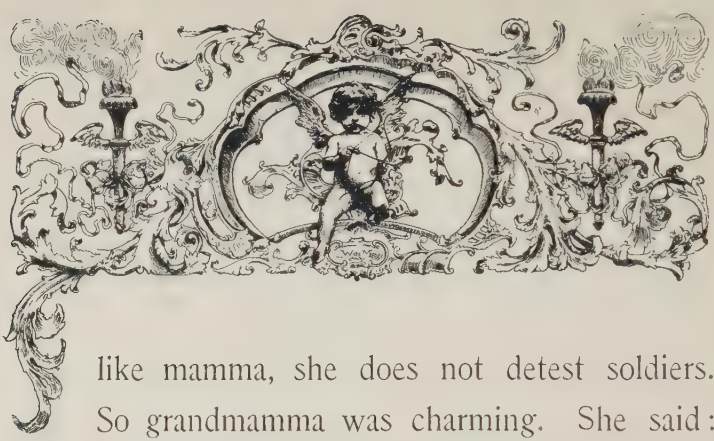


suits you, I assure you that your father and I will easily agree about the price."

"'With this, a circular bow to grandmamma, mamma, me, Georges, Bob, everybody. He was about to leave, but he stopped on the threshold. He evidently found it hard to go.'"

"Yes, that is true."

"'He said to me that he would like to give some explanation to our coachman as to the manner of bridling the horse and the bit which suited him best. Then grandmamma — grandmamma behaved charmingly! But then grandmamma is not



like mamma, she does not detest soldiers. So grandmamma was charming. She said: "Let us go down with the count, Jeanne; we will see the horse. Louis must be in the court-yard."

"'We went down, grandmamma, Georges, Bob, he, and I. The horse was there, held by a chasseur; and on the back of the horse I saw a side-saddle. The captain perceived my astonishment. — "I have a side-saddle," he said, "for my sister, who sometimes comes to ride at Saint Germain, and just now, as I would not for anything

in the world have exposed you to an accident, I had the horse taken to the riding-school, and I had my orderly ride him woman fashion."

"'I looked at the orderly; it was the chasseur I saw the other day, the chasseur who was talking to the porter. He knew me and I knew him. I became scarlet and the captain also blushed a little. I think he must have understood that the soldier and I recognized one another.

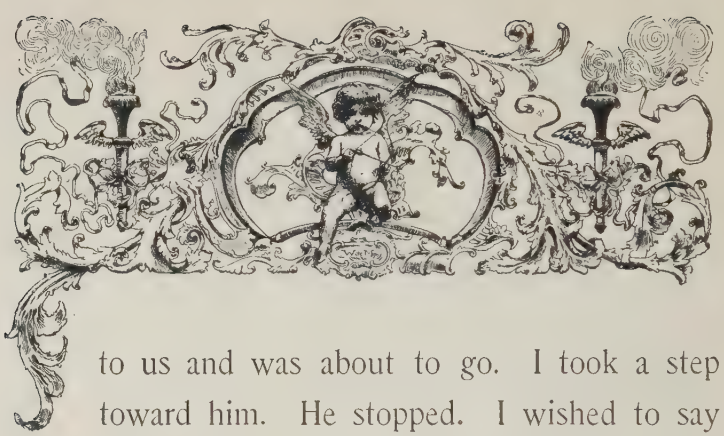
"'But this was nothing. The orderly spoke up and said:—"But my captain also rode the horse

on the side-saddle, with the sheet arranged like the skirt of a habit. He wished to make sure for himself."

"'Then the captain became so red and I so pale that the orderly stopped, being afraid of having said something stupid. Moved almost to tears, I stammered:—"Ah! how good you are, monsieur, how good you are!" He for his part repeated:—"It was very natural, mademoiselle, it was very natural."

"'And grandmamma, who is very acute, looked at me with her little eyes, which are at the same time very gentle and very piercing.

"'Louis came up, fortunately. He had not been in the courtyard. Georges had gone to find him. Then, before Louis, we had another little scrap of conversation. I do not know very well what was said then. He explained to us that the horse needed a very easy bit. I interrupted to say:—"A pelham?" He replied:—"No, not a pelham, a very light bit." He advised a simple or a sliding martingale, I do not recollect which. Finally, he carried his kindness to the point of giving suggestions as to the feed of the horse, so much of oats, of straw, of hay. After which he bowed

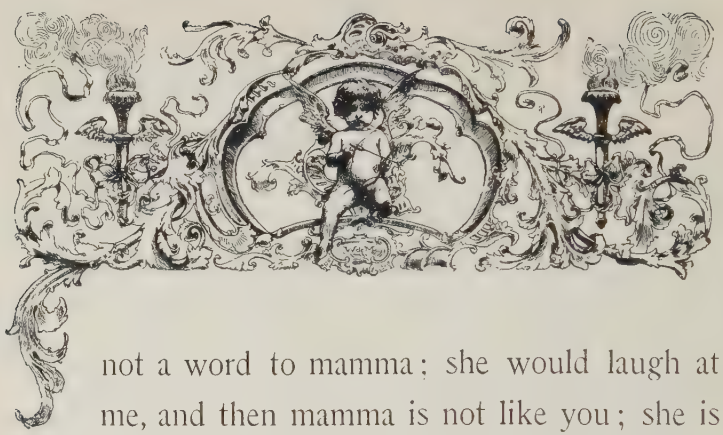


to us and was about to go. I took a step toward him. He stopped. I wished to say something amiable and pleasant to him, but my emotion choked me and the words would not come. He waited and repeated: — "Mademoiselle, mademoiselle." It was an intolerable situation. I had to speak at any cost. I could think of nothing but this: "I beg your pardon, monsieur, but what is the horse's name?" — "Jupiter, mademoiselle." — "Thank you, monsieur." — "Mademoiselle."

"'And he went off with the chasseur, who carried the side-saddle upon his shoulders. This

soldier is named Picot. Georges went into the stable with Louis. I remained alone with grandmamma, who said to me: — "Jeanette, come and take a little turn in the garden."

"'There, upon a bank, grandmamma questioned me. I told her everything — everything, that is to say nothing, for there is nothing, and yet that nothing is something. Grandmamma said to me: — "Little goose! little goose! do not go and take it into your head." — "I am not taking anything into my head, grandmamma; I know very well that it is all chance, yes, chance. But, I beg you,



not a word to mamma; she would laugh at me, and then mamma is not like you; she is not fond of soldiers."—"What? So I?"—"Yes, grandmamma, you do like them, and I have several times said to myself: 'I do not know, but it seems to me that it would not be disagreeable to grandmamma if I were to happen to marry a soldier.'"

"'We went in again.—"Here you are at last," said mamma. "But explain to me what is going on. It appears that the courtyard was full of soldiers."—"Not at all, mamma, there was only

this gentleman and his orderly." — "His orderly! Now you have come to speak the language of barracks." — "Mamma, it is a word which I just heard." — "Well, this gentleman appears perfectly well-bred, and besides, you did not perhaps notice when you read his card — see, he is a count." — "A count?" — "Yes, look." — "No, I had not observed it."

"'Could any one fib more brazenly? Mamma was very much milder. My poor dear mother is excellent, but she has one little weakness. If I were to become a marquise or a countess she

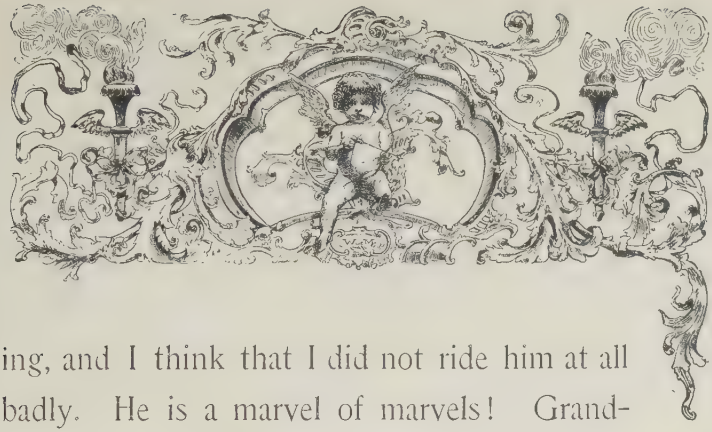
would be enchanted. I do not attach great importance to these things. Certainly it would not make me love some one whom I did not love. But, after all, it would not prevent my loving some one whom I might love.'"

"You have finished?"

"Yes, and it is enough, I think. It is your turn now."

"'Friday, June 6th. I must show discretion. I will not go into the forest or upon the terrace. I will wait.'"

"'Friday, June 6th. I rode Jupiter this morn-



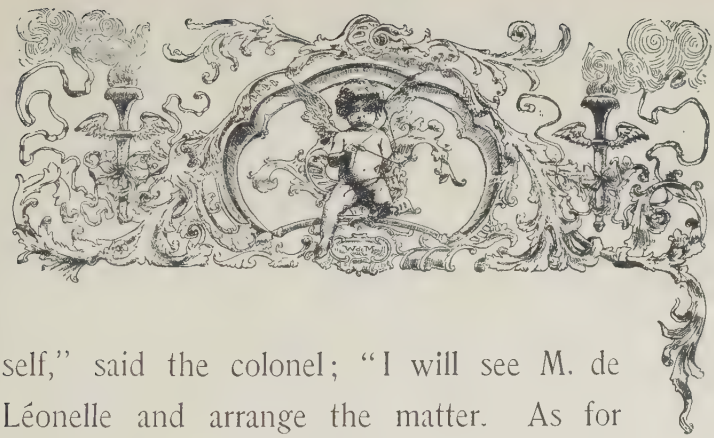
ing, and I think that I did not ride him at all badly. He is a marvel of marvels! Grandmamma was still asleep when I started; when I returned I went to her room to say good-morning to her. She was writing. She had not heard me open the door. Then, wishing to surprise her, I crept up behind her.'"

"It is a habit of yours, it appears."

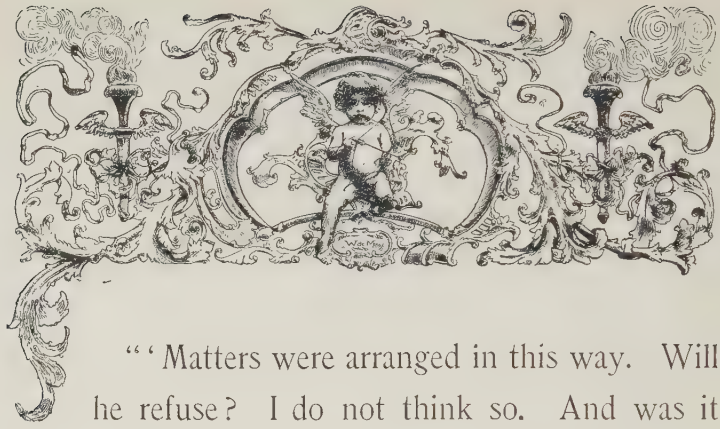
"'Grandmamma was writing a letter which began with these words: "My dear General." I saw only that. Grandmamma immediately hid her letter. I recollect that grandmamma knows a

general who occupies a fine position in the War Office. Why did grandmamma write to him this morning? And, above all, why did she hide her letter? After dinner, the affair of the horse was spoken of; papa would not leave to-morrow until the noon train. During the morning he would go to see M. de Léonelle.

"'The door opened. It was the colonel, and naturally they spoke of the horse and the visit set for the next morning; papa said that it discommoded him somewhat not to leave until noon, on account of his business. — "Do not trouble your-

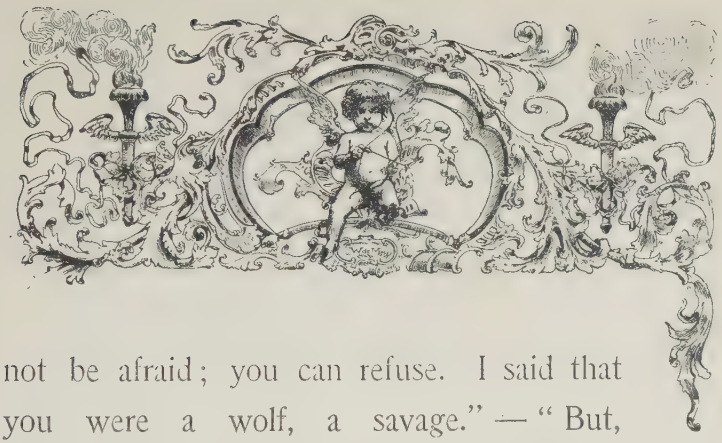


self," said the colonel; "I will see M. de Léonelle and arrange the matter. As for the price, it will be nineteen hundred francs. You can very well comprehend that M. de Léonelle did not wish to make a speculation. He saw that I knew you; he was glad to manifest his respect; he eagerly seized an opportunity to be agreeable to his colonel. Now you can very well show him a politeness in the course of a fortnight and ask him to dinner. He will probably refuse; he is a savage, a wolf. He shuts himself up every evening to work, outside of his duty, for his own account, from pleasure."



"'Matters were arranged in this way. Will he refuse? I do not think so. And was it only to be agreeable to his colonel? I do not think this either.'"

"'Saturday, June 7th. We were dismounting at half past eight o'clock in the courtyard of the quarters. The colonel came to me and thanked me for obliging him; he thinks that it was for his sake that I consented to — The question of price was settled in two sentences, and the colonel added: — "I think that they will probably invite you to dinner in the course of a fortnight, but do



not be afraid; you can refuse. I said that you were a wolf, a savage." — "But, colonel—" "Is it not true? You refuse all invitations." — "Perhaps I shall not refuse this one, colonel." — "Hillo! did I not understand? You give at cost price a horse which is worth at least three thousand francs and which you at first declared that you did not wish to sell. Ho! ho! the little blonde has pretty eyes." — "Well, yes, colonel; I confess that I think her charming!"

"'It escaped from me! The pleasure of speak-

ing of her — and it was a little hard to have no confidant but Picot.

"'They came to call the colonel for the Saturday report. While the chef d'escadrons for the week was recounting the great events of the day before: Such a mare was kicked, such a man missed evening roll-call, such a horse was bitten, etc., etc., during this time the colonel looked at me with an amused expression as he twisted his heavy grey moustache. After the report he went off, and as he passed near me, he said: "Just see this young savage

who is becoming civilized, and who sells his horses for love!"

"'The colonel is an excellent man, but horribly gossiping. My secret will soon be mine no longer!'"

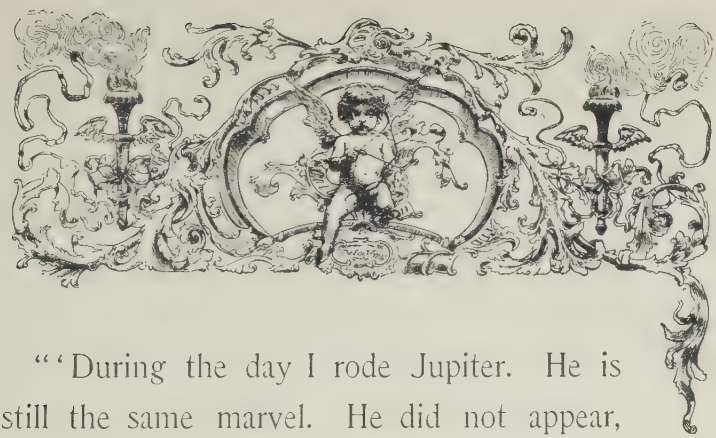
"'Saturday, June 7th. It is frightful! Last night I saw him in a dream. Yes, that is the point to which I have come. If M. Gambetta is mixed up with this dream, it is because they talked about him all through dinner the evening before. Well, he was general-in-chief. Not M. Gambetta; no, M. de Léonelle. He commanded

the whole French army; he won a great victory. M. Gambetta came to him and said:—"You have been Bonaparte,—be Napoleon."

"'M. Gambetta wished to place a crown upon his head; but he replied with admirable modesty:—"No, no, Bonaparte is enough for me; I do not care to be Napoleon."

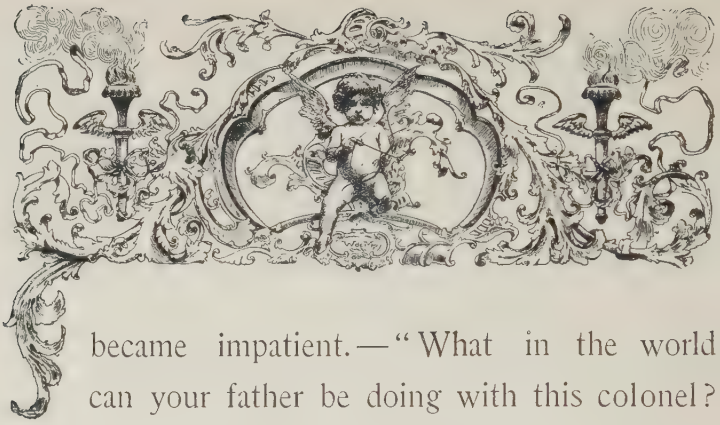
"'And M. Gambetta replied:—"That suits me quite as well; I shall remain in power."

"'How silly dreams are, and how silly it is to write such things!



"'During the day I rode Jupiter. He is still the same marvel. He did not appear, out of consideration for me, I am sure. In the evening, after dinner, reappearance of the colonel. Mamma, when she heard him announced, made a little face which meant to say: "What! this soldier again!"

"'The colonel told us that the matter of Jupiter was arranged at nineteen hundred francs. And then I saw that he turned about and manœuvred so as to carry off papa to smoke a cigar in the garden. A quarter of an hour passed. Mamma

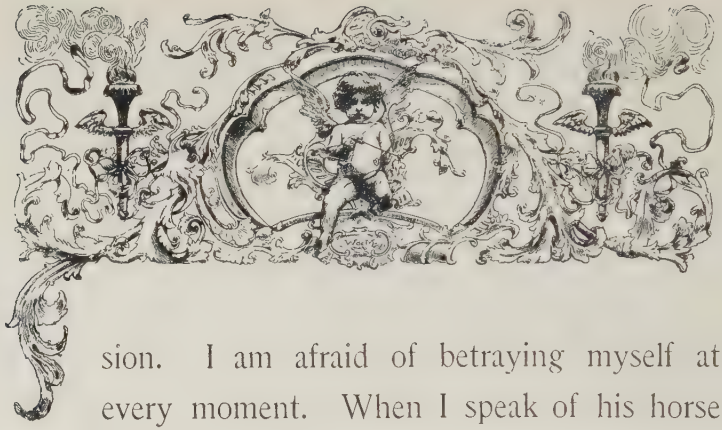


became impatient. — "What in the world can your father be doing with this colonel? He will catch cold; he is bare-headed. Take him his hat and try to make him come in." — "Yes, mamma."

"'I went into the garden. I heard this phrase pronounced by the colonel: — "A pearl, I tell you, a pearl." And then: — "Hush, take care." They changed the conversation. Ah! this is too much. Can he already have had my hand asked, hierarchically, by his colonel? Is this how matters are managed in the cavalry? It would be going

somewhat fast, after a single interview in which we spoke of nothing but hay, straw, and oats!

"'The colonel and papa returned to the drawing-room. The colonel left. Papa appeared thoughtful. At eleven o'clock, when I kissed him before going up to my room, he took both my hands and said:—"Are you pleased with this gentleman's horse?" I replied:—"Oh! yes, papa. If you only knew how I adore my dear Jupiter! I adore him!!" I think that I said this with too much fire, too much enthusiasm, too much pas-



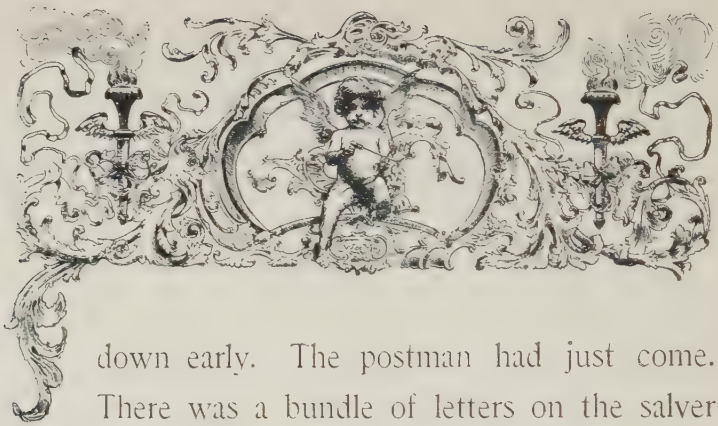
sion. I am afraid of betraying myself at every moment. When I speak of his horse it seems to me that I am speaking of him! And the pearl, who is the pearl? He or I?'"

"'Sunday, June 8th.—This morning I received this letter from my sister;—"I am completely exhausted. I have spent these two days in making forty calls. I managed to slip into the conversation this little phrase: 'Do you happen to know a Lablinière family?' I obtained five or six replies, all admirable. 'They are people of irreproachable breeding. Plenty of money, which

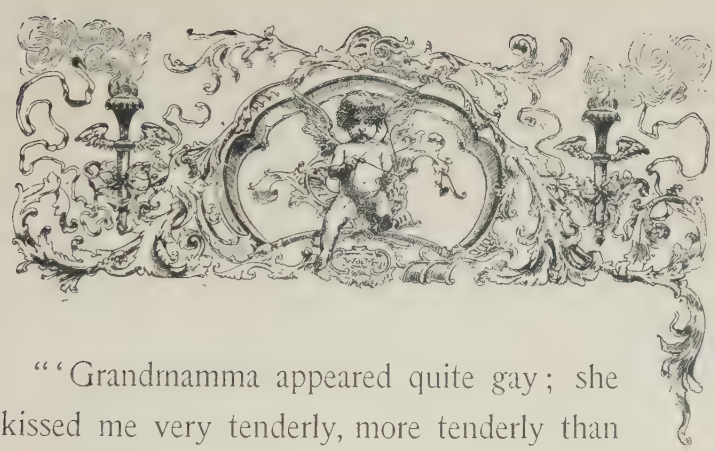
never does any harm, and money quite properly gained. About the young girl there was but a single cry: 'She is an angel!' So forward, captain, if your heart prompts you."

"'I remained stupefied. So every one can see that I am in love! My sister perceived it. At six o'clock came a little note from the father inviting me to dinner for next Wednesday, the 11th. The colonel had said to me: "In the course of a fortnight." Must I reply at once? No, only to-morrow.'"

"'Sunday, June 8th. This morning I came



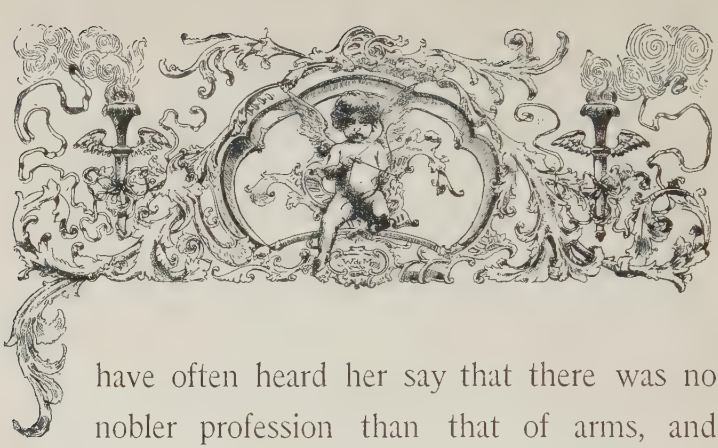
down early. The postman had just come. There was a bundle of letters on the salver in the antechamber. Is there one for me? No, but here is one for grandmamma, an official letter with a large red seal, and on the seal I read: "French Republic. War Office." To think that my fate is there, in that letter! For I am very sure that grandmamma asked for information. A servant came by and I fled like a thief. Ten o'clock. Grandmamma must be awake. She must have read her letter. I went up to her room.— "Ah! there you are, little one!"



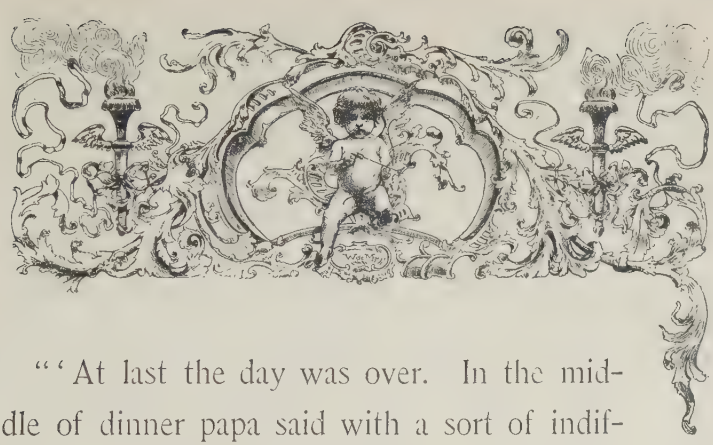
"'Grandmamma appeared quite gay; she kissed me very tenderly, more tenderly than usual. Oh! how pleased grandmamma was! One could see that merely by the way in which she kissed me this morning. This general's letter has given her pleasure.

"'To-day is Sunday. Papa did not go to Paris. After breakfast grandmamma said to him: "I wish to speak to you."—"Ah, and I to you."

"'They went together into the smoking-room. Why did grandmamma go there? To have papa read this letter? Grandmamma is patriotic. I

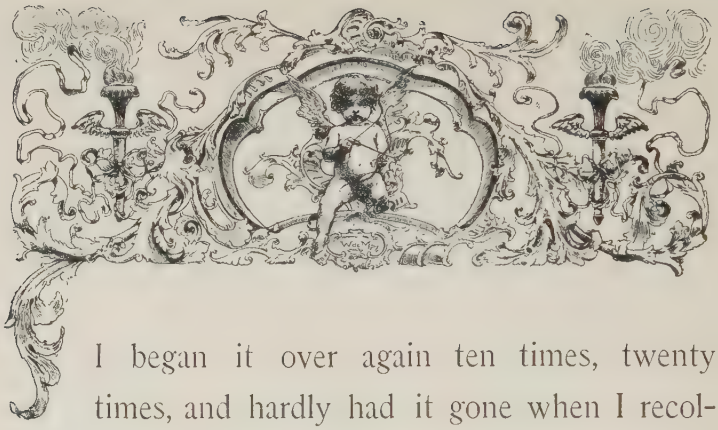


have often heard her say that there was no nobler profession than that of arms, and that those mothers are to blame who from selfishness prevent their daughters from marrying soldiers. Grandmamma despises those young men whose only merit consists in killing a great many pigeons in the spring and pheasants in the autumn: whereas mamma has a secret weakness for the youths who do nothing with their ten fingers beyond the aforesaid slaughter of pigeons and pheasants. Grandmamma and mamma constantly dispute upon this point.



"'At last the day was over. In the middle of dinner papa said with a sort of indifference, "That young officer was really very civil; I have asked him to dinner for next Wednesday."— "For Wednesday!" cried mamma. "What is the need for so much haste? If you begin to have all these officers here! This one is charming, I admit, but he will bring others. Our house will become a barracks, a camp."'"

"'Monday, June 9th. I am becoming stupid. I took an hour this morning to write the eight little lines of my letter to accept this invitation.



I began it over again ten times, twenty times, and hardly had it gone when I recollected that I had put the word pleasure twice in these unlucky eight lines.'"

"'Monday, June 9th. He has accepted! We were at breakfast this morning. All the windows of the dining-room open upon the courtyard. Suddenly mamma exclaimed: "Come: There is another soldier in the court!"

"'I looked, and this phrase escaped from me:— "It is Picot."

"'Then you should have seen mamma and

heard her. — "That caps the climax! Here is Jeanne, who now knows the names of all these soldiers!" — "Of only one, mamma. It is the one who brought Jupiter the other day."

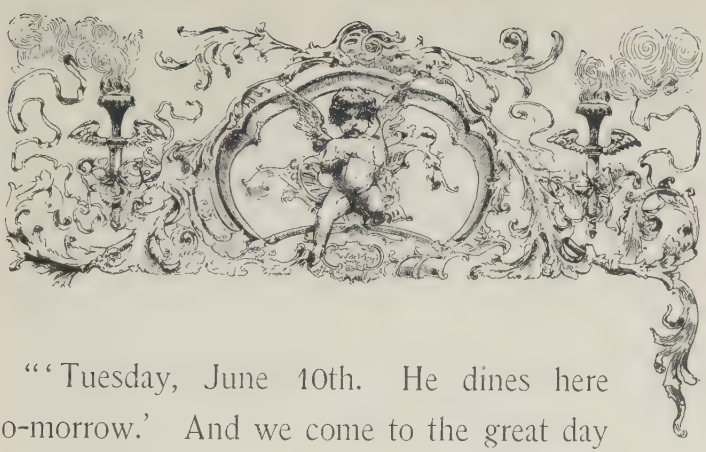
"'Grandmamma burst into a hearty laugh. How gay grandmamma is! She was singing on the stairs this morning. Certainly the information given by this general must be good.

"'After breakfast I got possession of his letter. How elegant it is in its simplicity! Here it is: — "Sir, I have received the invitation which you have done me the honor to send me for Wednes-

day, June 11th. I accept it with the greatest pleasure and the utmost gratitude. I have learned with a great deal of pleasure that mademoiselle your daughter was satisfied with the horse. Accept, sir, the assurance of my respectful sentiments."

"'It was purposely, I am sure, that he repeated the word pleasure twice. He knew that I would see his letter, and he wished to emphasize that idea.'"

"'Tuesday, June 10th. I dine at her house to-morrow.'"



"'Tuesday, June 10th. He dines here to-morrow.' And we come to the great day of the dinner. Do you read the account of the dinner."

"Will you take my advice, my Jeanette? Let us stop where we are for to-day. And besides, just see what time it is."

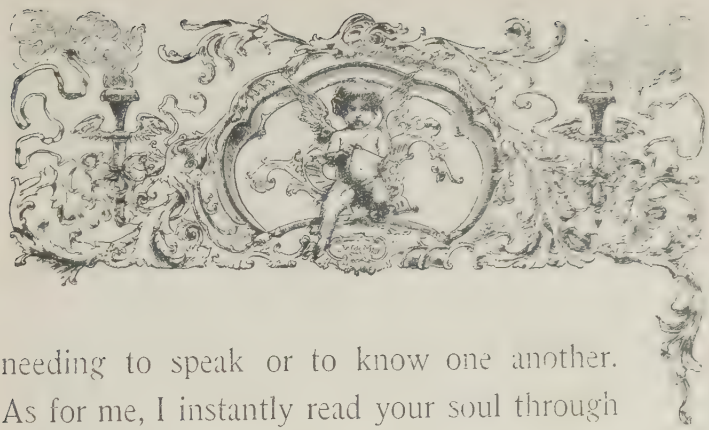
"Oh! two o'clock in the morning."

"Yes, two o'clock in the morning. That is one good reason for stopping. It is not the only one. I think that from now on our entries will become terribly monotonous. It will be love, and still love,

and always love! There will be nothing but that in our little notes — in mine at least."

"In mine, too."

"And love like everybody's, with liberty to see one another, to talk to one another. As soon as I could look at you closely, much merit I found in having seen you as you were, as you are, that is, the prettiest and best of women! Much merit in having loved you! No, don't you know, what was rare and delicious in our romance was its beginning. We loved each other in some sort instinctively, at a distance, at first sight, without



needing to speak or to know one another. As for me, I instantly read your soul through your eyes. From the 11th of June, the day of the dinner, to the 17th of August, the day of the wedding, we exchanged a great many words; we said many sweet and charming things to one another; but never, my Jeannette, did we have a more tender, passionate conversation than that absurd dialogue in the courtyard by the stable, in the presence of Jupiter and Picot. I was seized then with such an emotion that I felt that my fate was settled forever. I went out of that little

courtyard in the Rue des Arcades with the certainty that you would be mine, and that my whole life would be spent in trying to make you happy. That was nearly two years ago. Have I succeeded so far, my love?"

"Oh! yes, my darling. Oh! yes!"

She was no longer upon the little stool; she was on his knees. And laying aside the little books, they read no further that evening.

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